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IMMORTALS AT FIRST HAND

Famous People as seen by their Contemporaries

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By
CECIL HARMSWORTH

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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44, Great Russell Street
London

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To Em

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To :

SIR JOHN MURRAY. (Passages from the "Letters of Queen Victoria, 1837-1861"; and from "The Creevey Papers.")

MESSRS. MACMILLAN & CO. (Passages from "Matthew Arnold," by Herbert Paul; "George Eliot," by Leslie Stephen; and "Chapters from Some Memories," by Anne Thackeray Ritchie.)

MESSRS. SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & CO. and MESSRS. LITTLE, BROWN & CO., of Boston. (A passage from Captain A. T. Mahan's "Life of Nelson.")

MESSRS. CHATTO & WINDUS. (Passages from "The Life of J. M. W. Turner, R.A.," by Walter Thornbury.)

Also to :

MESSRS. FREDK. B. DANIELL & SON. (For the use of certain engraved portraits for reproduction.)

TO THE READER
GENTLE OR OTHERWISE

THE original plan of this modest compilation was very simple. It was to bring together contemporary personal descriptions, and no other than these, of some of the more famous figures in English literature and history—the essential point being that the descriptions should be those of *actual eye-witnesses*. This principle has been pretty faithfully observed, but it became clear from the outset that nothing was to be gained and much to be lost by a too strict adherence to it. It is, for example, interesting to possess, as we do so abundantly, contemporary pen-portraits of Dr. Johnson—much more satisfying, if to these we can add numberless little strokes and sidelights illustrative of his character, his way of life and his mode of thought. Even so, the portrait cannot be complete. No more than an impression can be created in such a work as this, which does not, of course, aim in any of its instances at anything approaching biography.

The omission of many great names will be noted. This is for many reasons—

- (1) The lack of material.
- (2) The uninterestingness of many illustrious personages.
- (3) The importance of not working out a pleasant vein to exhaustion.
- (4) The ignorance of the compiler.

Reason (1), the lack of material, is perhaps the

most convincing of the four. In regard to two great periods in English literature—those, namely, of the Johnson circle and of what we may call the Wordsworth-Byron era—there is enough material and to spare. The whole of this volume might have been filled, very easily, with interesting details relating to the outstanding figures of the epochs in question. Far otherwise is it with the Elizabethans. Is there in existence a written description, by a contemporary, of Shakespeare himself, of Ben Jonson, Spenser, Marlowe, Ford, Webster, Beaumont, John Fletcher, Massinger, Dekker, Tourneur, Shirley, Chapman, Heywood, Campion? If only Shakespeare had had his Boswell, or the Elizabethan age its Pepys! It was an age of friendliness among poets, of collaboration often in dramatic work, and, generally, of an unjealous and unaffected appreciation of the other man's powers and achievements. Tantalising glimpses are afforded—as by Herrick—of their

“ . . . lyric feasts
Made at the Sun,
The Dog, the Triple Tun ”;

and by Beaumont, also in reminiscent vein, with his

“ What things have we seen
Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have been
So nimble and so full of subtle flame
As if that every one from whom they came
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
And had resolved to live a fool the rest
Of his dull life.”

Of those words "so nimble and so full of subtle flame" there is no record, nor is there any description of the participants in these jousts of wit. Even old Thomas Fuller, in his famous account of the wit-combats between Shakespeare and Jonson, does no more than write from hearsay, for he was only eight years of age at the time of Shakespeare's death. Posterity, let me claim, would be content to exchange half a dozen of the lesser Elizabethan poets for a Boswell or a Pepys of that period.

The second reason for the omission of perhaps expected names is, as I dare suggest, that many great people have been very dull. They did not lend themselves to gossip, to reminiscence or to "divine chit-chat" of any kind. We are content to hold them in reverence, to accept them on trust—and to hear no more about them. Statesmen, very often, have belonged to this category; together with philosophers, pioneers in industrial development, economists and other solemn people. To have strained after their inclusion in this collection, to have aimed at an unduly conscientious comprehensiveness, would have been to overweight a light-hearted enterprise.

And then there is the fourth consideration, namely, the ignorance of the compiler. Nobody, with the possible exceptions of Lord Macaulay and Dr. Mahaffy, has ever known everything. But detected ignorance in an author (or compiler) is an engaging quality that goes to the heart of the well-informed reader. It flatters his vanity:

it protuberates his bump of self-esteem. How much better, how much more fully and knowledgeably, could he have done the job himself ! How comes it that such and such an inevitable passage has been omitted, and why, again, is the selection of passages under such and such a name so inadequate ? Sometimes the only honest rejoinder to such objections is that of Dr. Johnson : “ Ignorance, Madam (or Sir), pure ignorance.”

Not but that a good many inevitable and very familiar passages have been purposely included in this collection : e.g. J. W. Croker’s account of the only meeting between Nelson and Wellington, and Sir Isaac Newton’s sublimely modest reflection on the limitations of his scientific knowledge. Most people have a memory of these celebrated passages at the back of their minds, but the space they occupy in this volume will not be grudged by those who are glad to see them again and to possess them in readily accessible form. There is pleasure in the revival of such old memories and in their confirmation by the re-perusal of the authentic texts.

It scarcely needs to be added that no serious purpose underlies the preparation and publication of this book. So much the better, indeed, if it serves, in reminding its readers of certain of the great figures in our national life and literature, to send them back to a full study of their personalities, their works and achievements. There is no more delightful form of indoor

recreation. But this unambitious volume is designed merely to amuse—to be read at random, a few pages at a time, when the mind is indisposed to bulkier and more exacting literature. If it comes to be regarded as an agreeable Bedside Book, the compiler will have found, in ample measure, the reward of his industry.

C. H.

P.S.—Experiment has been made with a few contemporary pen-portraits. It is a feature that in subsequent Editions might, if approved, be considerably extended. But there is a difficulty. To be truthful one must sometimes be unkind, and it would be alien to the spirit of this little venture, and altogether outside its scope, to excite controversy and, much more, to wound the susceptibilities of surviving relations and friends.

IMMORTALS AT FIRST HAND

JOSEPH ADDISON (1672-1719)

That man [Addison] has worth enough to give reputation to an age. . . . I believe if he had a mind to be chosen King he would hardly be refused.

(Dean Swift)



Of his habits, or external manners, nothing is so often mentioned as that timorous or sullen taciturnity, which his friends called modesty by too mild a name. Chesterfield affirms, that "Addison was the most timorous and awkward man that he ever saw." And Addison, speaking of his own deficiency in conversation, used to say of himself, that, with respect to intellectual wealth, "he could draw bills for a thousand pounds, though he had not a guinea in his pocket."

The time in which he lived had reason to lament his obstinacy of silence : "for he was," says Steele, "above all men in that talent we call humour, and enjoyed it in such perfection, that I have often reflected, after a night spent with him apart from all the world, that I had had the pleasure of conversing with an intimate acquaintance of Terence and Catullus, who had all their wit and nature, heightened with humour more exquisite and delightful than any other man ever

possessed." This is the fondness of a friend ; let us hear what is told us by a rival : " Addison's conversation," says Pope, " had something in it more charming than I have found in any other man. But this was only when familiar : before strangers, or perhaps a single stranger, he preserved his dignity by a stiff silence."

(*Dr. Johnson*)



From Mr. Addison's excessive modesty, he was never able to speak in parliament ; a very important inconvenience this, especially during the period that he held the high office of Secretary of State, as he was thereby incapable of explaining to friends or vindicating to opponents, the measures he supported.

(*Addisoniana*)



Addison usually studied all the morning : then met his party at Button's ; dined there, and stayed five or six hours ; and sometimes far into the night. I was of the company for about a year, but found it too much for me : it hurt my health, and so I quitted it.

(*Alexander Pope*)



I dined with Mr. Addison and Dick Stuart, Lord Mountjoy's brother. They were half fuddled, but not I ; for I mixed water with my wine, and left them together between nine and ten.

(*Dean Swift*)

Many of his Spectators he wrote very fast ; and he sent them to the press as soon as they were written. It seems to have been best for him not to have had too much time to correct.

(*A. Pope*)



Mr. Addison's respect for Milton evinced itself in the following instance of kindness to one of his children. Hearing that Mrs. Clarke, Milton's daughter, was yet living, he one day sent for her. On being introduced to Mr. Addison, he told her, " that he knew who she was upon the first sight of her, by the similitude of her countenance with her father's picture." He had desired her, if she had any papers of her father's, she would bring them with her, as an evidence of being Milton's daughter ; but on seeing her, he said, " Madam, you need no other voucher ; your face is a sufficient testimonial who you are " ; and he then made her a handsome present of a purse of guineas.

(*Addisoniana*)

MATTHEW ARNOLD (1822-1888)

Matthew Arnold's appearance was both impressive and agreeable. He was tall, of commanding presence, with black hair, which never became grey, and blue eyes. He was short-sighted, and his eye-glass gave him a false air of superciliousness. . . . In reality he was the most genial and amiable of men. But he had a good deal of manner, which those who did not know him mistook for assumption. It was nothing of the kind, but a mixture of old-fashioned courtesy and comic exaggeration. . . . He was essentially a polished man of the world. He never gave himself airs, or seemed conscious of any superiority to those about him. Considerate politeness to young and old, rich and poor, obscure and eminent, was the practice of his life. His standard was the standard of a Christian gentleman. . . . No one could be cross or bored when Matthew Arnold was in the room. . . . For a poet he was surprisingly practical, taking a lively interest in people's incomes, the rents of their houses, the produce of their gardens, and the size of their families. He had none of Wordsworth's contempt for gossip, and his father's strenuous earnestness had not descended on him.

(Herbert Paul)



Striking and prepossessing in appearance, his manner displeases from its seeming foppery. I

own it caused me at first to regard him with regretful surprise ; the shade of Dr. Arnold seemed to me to frown on his young representative. I was told, however, that " Mr. Arnold improved upon acquaintance." So it was : ere long a real modesty appeared under his assumed conceit, and some genuine intellectual aspirations, as well as high educational acquirements, displaced superficial affectations. I was given to understand that his theological opinions were very vague and unsettled, and indeed he betrayed as much in the course of conversation. Most unfortunate for him, doubtless, has been the untimely loss of his father.

(Charlotte Brontë)

JANE AUSTEN (1775-1817)

In person she was very attractive ; her figure was rather tall and slender, her step light and firm, and her whole appearance expressive of health and animation. In complexion she was a clear brunette with a rich colour ; she had full round cheeks, with mouth and nose small and well formed, bright hazel eyes, and brown hair forming natural curls close round her face. [She] was fond of music, and had a sweet voice, both in singing and in conversation.

. . . Happy would the compositors for the press be if they had always so legible a manuscript [as Jane Austen's] to work from. But the writing was not the only part of her letters which showed superior handiwork. In those days there was an art in folding and sealing. No adhesive envelopes made all easy. Some people's letters always looked loose and untidy ; but her paper was sure to take the right folds, and her sealing-wax to drop into the right place. Her needlework both plain and ornamental was excellent, and might almost have put a sewing machine to shame. She was considered especially great in satin stitch. She spent much time in these occupations, and some of her merriest talk was over clothes which she and her companions were making, sometimes for themselves, and sometimes for the poor.

(*The Rev. J. E. Austen-Leigh*)



JANE AUSTEN
From an engraving

Read again, for the third time at least, Miss Austen's finely written novel of "Pride and Prejudice." That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life, which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The big Bow-Wow strain I can do myself like any now going ; but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things interesting from the truth of the descriptions and the sentiment is denied me. What a pity such a gifted creature died so early !

(Sir Walter Scott)



No two writers could be more unlike each other than Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë ; so much so that the latter was unable to understand why the former was admired, and confessed that she herself " should hardly like to live with her ladies and gentlemen, in their elegant but confined houses."

(The Rev. J. E. Austen-Leigh)



I have now read over again all Miss Austen's novels. Charming they are ; but I found a little more to criticize than formerly. Yet there are in the world no compositions which approach nearer to perfection.

(Lord Macaulay)

LORD BACON (1561-1626)

I have taken all knowledge to be my province.

(Bacon, on himself)



He had a delicate, lively, hazel eye. Dr. Harvey told me it was like the eye of a viper.

(John Aubrey)



His first and childish years were not without some mark of eminency ; at which time he was endued with that pregnancy and towardness of wit, as they were presages of that deep and universal apprehension which was manifest in him afterwards ; and caused him to be taken notice of by several persons of worth and place, and especially by the Queen [Elizabeth] ; who (as I have been informed) delighted much then to confer with him, and to prove him with questions ; unto whom he delivered himself with that gravity and maturity above his years, that her Majesty would often term him, “ the young Lord-keeper.” Being asked by the Queen how old he was, he answered with much discretion, being then but a boy, that “ he was two years younger than her Majesty’s happy reign,” with which answer the Queen was much taken.



He seated himself, for the commodity of his studies and practice, amongst the Honourable

Society of Gray's Inn, of which house he was a member. . . . In which house he carried himself with such sweetness, comity, and generosity, that he was much revered and beloved by the readers and gentlemen of the house.



His meals were refectations of the ear as well as of the stomach . . . wherein a man might be refreshed in his mind and understanding no less than in his body. And I have known some, of no mean parts, that have professed to make use of their note-books when they have risen from his table. In which conversations, and otherwise, he was no dashing man, as some men are, but ever a countenancer and fosterer of another man's parts. Neither was he one that would appropriate the speech wholly to himself, or delight to outvie others, but leave a liberty to the co-assessors to take their turns. Wherein he would draw a man on and allure him to speak upon such a subject, as wherein he was peculiarly skilful and would delight to speak. And for himself, he contemned no man's observations, but would light his torch at every man's candle.

(William Rawley, Bacon's Chaplain)



When his Lordship was at his country house at Gorhambury, St. Albans seemed as if the court were there, so nobly did he live. . . . Three

of his Lordship's servants kept their coaches, and some kept race-horses. . . .

Upon his being in disfavour his servants suddenly went away ; he compared them to the flying of the vermin when the house was falling.

(John Aubrey)



There happened in my time one noble speaker [Bacon] who was full of gravity in his speaking. His language (where he could spare or pass by a jest) was nobly censorious. No man ever spake more neatly, more pressly, more weightily, or suffered less emptiness, less idleness, in what he uttered. No member of his speech but consisted of his own graces. His hearers could not cough, or look aside from him, without loss. He commanded where he spoke ; and had his judges angry and pleased at his devotion. No man had their affections more in his power. The fear of every man that heard him was, lest he should make an end.

(Ben Jonson)



For my name and memory, I leave it to men's charitable speeches, to foreign nations, and to the next ages.

(Bacon, in his Will)

ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR

1st Earl of Balfour (1848-1930)

A man of extraordinary charm of appearance, of manner and of voice. His head was the finest in its suggestion of intellect that I have ever seen, and it is a pity that it has never been adequately represented in art. Nor is there, I suppose, any adequate record of his voice, which revealed, as he spoke, new beauties in the tones and cadences of the English language.

Yet was there something curiously lacking in this fascinating personality. Charm and polish and urbanity were his in highest degree and a fastidious delicacy of mind and manner that extended to the tips of his tapering fingers (the fingers of a musician) ; but was there any warmth of blood behind it all? Or was he all cold intellect? Certainly, he rarely succeeded in winning the affection of his political and official colleagues.

Lord Balfour will perhaps be best remembered in history as the statesman who debated for years the question of Protection *versus* Free Trade without anybody knowing for certain whether he was himself Protectionist or Free Trader. I have heard him a hundred times on this subject and have marvelled every time at the brilliance of his dialectic as he thought aloud—and at the evasiveness of his meaning. But on other political questions he could be clear as sunlight.

Undoubtedly, he formed the opinion early in "Tariff Reform" days that his party must not be committed to Tariffs. Perhaps it was with him a matter of political expediency. Or perhaps he was, in fact, a Free Trader? However it was, having resolved, he pursued his course with never-relaxing tenacity. So, for half a generation and more, the political world enjoyed the spectacle of "Joe" Chamberlain going whole-hog for Protection on the platform, while his chief, Mr. Balfour, was sterilising Protection in the House of Commons. Sublety and tenacity were the notes of a character which seemed, but was not, that of an intellectual *dilettante*. His tenacity, and his courage, too, had been exhibited before during his term in the then dangerous office of Chief Secretary for Ireland.

It is a strange, even an incongruous reflection, that when the historian comes to deal with the personalities of this age he may be disposed to summarize, only too briefly, Lord Balfour's achievements in statesmanship and in philosophical literature and to dwell rather on the fact of his having popularised his native game of golf in England and so in the world at large!

(C. H.)

FREDERICK EDWIN SMITH
1st Earl of Birkenhead (1872-1930)

One of the most dazzling episodes in the history of the House of Commons took place at the evening sitting of the 12th March, 1906. It was the year of the famous Liberal victory. On the Ministerial side members overflowed, even into the gangways and the little-used side galleries. Their mood was as joyous and triumphant as that of the slender band of Conservatives on the opposite benches was dispirited and subdued. Of the great figures of Conservatism only "Joe" Chamberlain had survived the *débâcle* of the recent General Election. Even Arthur Balfour had been defeated and would not have been in the House but that a seat had been hurriedly found for him in the City of London. "Down and out" were the forces that had dominated British politics without effective check or challenge since 1895, and it seemed as if nothing less than miraculous could revive them.

It was a Free Trade debate and after Philip Snowden had made a contribution of acrid eloquence, a slim dark young member rose from behind the front opposition bench and was called by Mr. Speaker as "Mr. Frederick Edwin Smith." It was "F. E." of Wadham, member for the Walton Division of Liverpool. His fame had spread from Oxford and he had already distinguished himself notably at the Bar, but the

House of Commons cares nothing for outside reputations and was little expectant of the display that followed. It was prepared to extend to this maiden speaker its customary indulgence on such occasions. In a moment it became clear that the member for the Walton Division was in no need of any sort of good-natured concessions. With head bent down and in a soft mellifluous voice that was nevertheless heard in every part of the House, the new member took the debate in hand from his first sentence. How to describe this greatest of all maiden speeches ! A deadly stream of hissing invective ; a coruscation of wit and humour, irony and sarcasm ; a blaze of oratorical fireworks ! It was all these different things and more. In regard to the manner and style of the oration, those who heard it were at a loss which most to admire—the felicity of its language and the facility of its utterance—the swiftness with which the speaker fell on an interruption and annihilated the interrupter—or his imperturbability of demeanour as the House warmed up, as it will, to the excitement of a great occasion. Not even the ecstatic cheers of his friends perturbed him nor the general and long-continued applause that followed his peroration.

“ F. E.” had arrived at one bound. All the prizes of his profession, all the rewards of politics, were in prospect for him. He had revived the hopes and earned the gratitude of his party. It might almost be said that he had turned the political situation. And all by a maiden speech !



EARL OF BIRKENHEAD

From a photograph by Russell, London

Afterwards, there was the " F. E.", law officer of the Crown ; " F. E.", Lord High Chancellor, delivering judgments that were the envy and admiration of his learned colleagues ; " F. E." (weary of the Woolsack), Secretary of State for India ; a potent figure in Cabinet Councils ; and, strangest of all, a pacificator in Ireland.

Always he was a gay and delightful companion—to spend an " all night " sitting with him at the House was a happy experience, the long and otherwise weary hours passing quickly to the accompaniment of his witty sallies and rich laughter. The staunchest of friends he was, too, and (outside the debating chamber) a generous foe.

And always there was a suggestion of the swashbuckler about him, a touch of the soldier of fortune : the world was his oyster. He chose for his heraldic motto the legend *Faber meæ fortunæ*, as Sydney Smith had done before him. Smith of his own fortunes he was indeed ! His achievements were all his own, and there have been few as brilliant in all our political history.

(C. H.)

WILLIAM BLAKE (1757-1827)

In person, there was much in Blake which answered to the remarkable man he was. Though low in stature, not quite five feet and a half, and broad shouldered, he was well made, and did not strike people as short. For he had an upright carriage and a good presence ; he bore himself with dignity, as not unconscious of his natural claims. The head and face were strongly stamped with the power and character of the man. There was great volume of brain in that square head, that piled up brow, very full and rounded at the temples, where, according to phrenologists, ideality or imagination resides. His eyes were fine—"wonderful eyes," some one calls them ; prominently set, but bright, spiritual, visionary ; —not restless nor wild, but with "a look of clear heavenly exaltation." . . . His nose was insignificant as to size, but had that peculiarity which gives to a face an expression of fiery energy, as of a high-mettled steed,—“a little *clenched* nostril ; a nostril that opened as far as it could, but was tied down at one end.” His mouth was wide, the lips not full, but tremulous, and expressive of the great sensibility which characterised him.

. . . In his dress there was a similar triumph of the man over his poverty to that which struck one in his rooms. Indoors, he was careful, for economy's sake, but not slovenly : his clothes were threadbare, and his grey trousers had worn

black and shiny in front, like a mechanic's. Out of doors, he was more particular, so that his dress did not, in the streets of London, challenge attention either way. He wore black knee breeches and buckles, black worsted stockings, shoes which tied, and a broad-brimmed hat.

(Alexander Gilchrist)



There is something in the madness of this man which interests me more than the sanity of Lord Byron and Walter Scott.

(William Wordsworth)



A short call this morning on Blake. He dwells in Fountain Court, in the Strand. I found him in a small room, which seems to be both a working-room and a bedroom. Nothing could exceed the squalid air both of the apartment and his dress ; yet there is diffused over him an air of natural gentility. . . . There is something so delightful about the man, though in great poverty, he is so perfect a gentleman, with such genuine dignity and independence—scorning presents, and of such a native delicacy in words, etc., etc.—that I have not scrupled promising to bring him and Mr. Wordsworth together. He expressed his thanks strongly, saying, “ You do me honour : Mr. Wordsworth is a great man.” . . . Coleridge has visited Blake and I am told talks finely about him.

Blake is an engraver by trade, a painter and a poet also, whose works have been a subject of derision to men in general ; but he has a few admirers, and some of eminence have eulogized his designs.

(*Henry Crabb Robinson*)



Blake is a real name, I assure you, and a most extraordinary man, if he is still living.* . . . He paints in water colours marvellous strange pictures, visions of his brain, which he asserts that he has seen. They have great merit. . . . His poems have been sold hitherto only in manuscript. I never read them ; but a friend at my desire procured the "Sweep Song." There is one to a tiger, which I have heard recited, beginning :

"Tiger, Tiger, burning bright,
Thro' the deserts of the night,"

which is glorious. . . . I must look on him as one of the most extraordinary persons of the age.

(*Charles Lamb, in a letter to Bernard Barton, 1824*)

* Blake survived, in poverty and obscurity, until 1827.

JAMES BOSWELL (1740-1795)

Boswell is a man who I believe never left a house without leaving a wish for his return.

(*Dr. Johnson*)



. . . Boswell, that quintessence of busybodies, called on me last week, and was let in, which he should not have been could I have foreseen it.

(*Horace Walpole*)



He spoke the Scotch accent strongly so as to effect, even slightly, his intelligibility to an English ear. He had an odd, mock solemnity of tone and manner, that he had acquired imperceptibly from constantly thinking of and imitating Dr. Johnson, whose own solemnity, nevertheless, far from mock, was the result of pensive meditation. There was, also, something slouching in the gait and dress of Mr. Boswell that wore an air, ridiculously enough, of purporting to personify the same model. His clothes were always too large for him ; his hair, or wig, was constantly in a state of negligence ; and he never for a moment sat still or upright upon a chair. Every look and movement displayed either intentional or involuntary imitation. Yet certainly it was not meant in caricature, for his heart, almost even to idolatry, was in his reverence of

Dr. Johnson. . . . When he met with Dr. Johnson, he commonly forebore even answering anything that was said, or attending to anything that went forward, lest he should miss the smallest sound from that voice to which he paid such exclusive, though merited homage. But the moment that voice burst forth, the attention which it excited in Mr. Boswell amounted almost to pain. His eyes goggled with eagerness ; he leant his ear almost on the shoulder of the Doctor ; and his mouth dropped open to catch every syllable that might be uttered ; nay, he seemed not only to dread losing a word, but to be anxious not to miss a breathing, as if hoping from it, latently or mystically, some information.

(Fanny Burney)



On Saturday, May 1, we dined by ourselves at our old rendezvous, the Mitre tavern. He [Dr. Johnson] was placid, but not much disposed to talk. He observed, that “ The Irish mix better with the English than the Scotch do ; their language is nearer to English ; as a proof of which, they succeed very well as players, which Scotchmen do not. Then, Sir, they have not that extreme nationality which we find in the Scotch. I will do you, Boswell, the justice to say, that you are the most *unscottified* of your countrymen. You are almost the only instance of a Scotchman that I have known, who did not at every other sentence bring in some other Scotchman.”

Once, when checking my boasting too frequently of myself in company, he said to me, "Boswell, you often vaunt so much as to provoke ridicule. You put me in mind of a man who was standing in the kitchen of an inn with his back to the fire, and thus accosted the person next him, 'Do you know, Sir, who I am?' 'No, Sir' (said the other), 'I have not that advantage.' 'Sir' (said he), I am the *great* TWALMLEY, who invented the New Floodgate Iron,' " (an iron for smoothing linen).

(Boswell, in his *Life of Johnson*)



Boswell tells me he is printing *anecdotes* of Johnson ; not his *life*, but, as he has the vanity to call it, his *pyramid*. I besought his tenderness for our virtuous and most revered departed friend, and begged he would mitigate some of his asperities. He said, roughly, "He would not cut off his claws, nor make a tiger a cat to please anybody." It will, I doubt not, be a very amusing book ; but I hope not an indiscreet one.

(Hannah More in 1785)



Another evening Johnson's kind indulgence toward me had a pretty difficult trial. I had dined at the Duke of Montrose's with a very agreeable party, and his Grace, according to his usual custom, had circulated the bottle very freely. Lord Graham and I went together to

Miss Monckton's, where I certainly was in extraordinary spirits, and above all fear or awe. In the midst of a great number of persons of the first rank, amongst whom I recollect with confusion, a noble lady of the most stately decorum, I placed myself next to Johnson, and thinking myself now fully his match, talked to him in a loud and boisterous manner, desirous to let the company know how I could contend with the *Ajax*. I particularly remember pressing him upon the value of the pleasures of the imagination, and as an illustration of my argument, asking him, "What, Sir, supposing I were to fancy that the — (naming the most charming Duchess in his Majesty's dominions) were in love with me, should I not be very happy?" My friend with much address evaded my interrogatories, and kept me as quiet as possible; but it may easily be conceived how he must have felt. However, when a few days afterwards I waited upon him and made an apology, he behaved with the most friendly gentleness.

(Boswell)



Tuesday we were a small and very choice party at Bishop Shipley's. . . . I was heartily disgusted with Mr. Boswell, who came upstairs after dinner, much disordered with wine, and addressed me in a manner which drew from me a sharp rebuke, for which I fancy he will not easily forgive me.

(Hannah More)

On Sunday we [Dr. Johnson and Boswell] went to the church of Ashbourne, which is one of the largest and most luminous that I have seen in any town of the same size. I felt great satisfaction in considering that I was supported in my fondness for solemn public worship by the general concurrence and munificence of mankind.

(*Boswell*)



. . . The book of Boswell [his life of Dr. Johnson] is, ever as the year comes round, my winter-evening's entertainment: I loved the man; he had great convivial powers and an inexhaustible fund of good humour in society; no body could detail the spirit of a conversation in the true style and character of the parties more happily than my friend James Boswell, especially when his vivacity was excited, and his heart exhilarated by the circulation of the glass, and the grateful odour of a well-broiled lobster.

(*Richard Cumberland*)

THOMAS BOWDLER, M.D., F.R.S.
(1754-1825)

Mr. Bowdler, a very worthy, extremely little
man. (*Fanny Burney*)

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PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME & BROWNE
PATERNOSTER-ROW
1820

CHARLOTTE BRONTË (1816–1855)

. . . In 1831, she was a quiet, thoughtful girl, of nearly fifteen years of age, very small in figure—"stunted" was the word she applied to herself,—but as her limbs and head were in just proportion to the slight fragile body, no word in ever so slight a degree suggestive of deformity could properly be applied to her; with soft, thick, brown hair, and peculiar eyes, of which I find it difficult to give a description, as they appeared to me in her later life. They were large and well shaped; their colour a reddish-brown; but if the iris was closely examined, it appeared to be composed of a great variety of tints. The usual expression was of quiet, listening intelligence; but now and then, on some just occasion for vivid interest or wholesome indignation, a light would shine out, as if some spiritual lamp had been kindled, which glowed behind those expressive orbs. I never saw the like in any other human creature.

As for the rest of her features, they were plain, large and ill set; but, unless you began to catalogue them, you were hardly aware of the fact, for the eyes and power of the countenance overbalanced every physical defect; the crooked mouth and large nose were forgotten, and the whole face arrested the attention and presently attracted all those whom she herself would have cared to attract.

Her hands and feet were the smallest I ever saw ; when one of the former was placed in mine, it was like the soft touch of a bird in the middle of my palm. The delicate long fingers had a peculiar fineness of sensation, which was one reason why all her handiwork, of whatever kind—writing, sewing, knitting—was so clear in its minuteness. She was remarkably neat in her whole personal attire ; but she was dainty as to the fit of her shoes and gloves.

(Mrs. Gaskell)



One of the most notable persons who ever came into our bow-windowed drawing-room in Young Street is a guest never to be forgotten by me—a tiny, delicate, little person, whose small hand nevertheless grasped a mighty lever which set all the literary world of that day vibrating. I can still see the scene quite plainly—the hot summer evening, the open windows, the carriage driving to the door as we all sat silent and expectant ; my father [W. M. Thackeray] who rarely waited, waiting with us ; our governess and my sister and I all in a row, and prepared for the great event. We saw the carriage stop, and out of it sprang the active well-knit figure of Mr. George Smith, who was bringing Miss Brontë to see our father. My father, who had been walking up and down the room, goes out into the hall to meet his guests, and then, after a moment's delay, the door opens wide, and the

two gentlemen come in, leading a tiny, delicate, serious, little lady, pale, with fair straight hair, and steady eyes. She may be a little over thirty ; she is dressed in a little barège dress, with a pattern of faint green moss. She enters in mittens, in silence, in seriousness ; our hearts are beating with wild excitement. This, then, is the authoress, the unknown power whose books have set all London talking, reading, speculating ; some people even say our father wrote the books—the wonderful books.

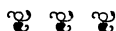
(Anne Thackeray Ritchie)

GEORGE BRYAN BRUMMELL

“ *Beau Brummell* ” (1778–1840)

I remember that Lord Byron once described him to me, as having nothing remarkable in his style of dress, except a “ certain exquisite propriety.”

(*Leigh Hunt*)



His face was rather long, and complexion fair ; his whiskers inclined to sandy, and hair light brown. His features were neither plain nor handsome, but his head was well-shaped, the forehead being unusually high. . . . The bump of self-esteem was very prominent. His countenance indicated that he possessed considerable intelligence, and his mouth betrayed a strong disposition to indulge in sarcastic humour.



Brummell's manner and address, which made him so acceptable, and enabled him to take such a leading part in society, were not his only recommendations ; he was a charming companion, and was possessed of the best of all claims to popularity—good humour. He drew well, and was not ignorant of music, and his voice was very agreeable in singing as well as in speaking ; he also wrote *vers de société*, one of the accomplishments in vogue in his day, with facility, and his dancing was perfect. . . . There was no affectation or pretension about him ; but if one peculiarity could be observed it was a tinge of the graceful

formality generally described as “of the old school.” His carriage was noble, all his movements were graceful and dignified . . . and his deportment was so peculiarly striking that, in walking down St. James’s Street, he attracted the attention of the passers by as much as the Prince of Wales himself. To admire whatever was elegant was natural to him, and his living in the midst of every description of refinement in palaces, or in mansions hardly if at all inferior, fully accounts for the taste and judgment which he possessed in buhl, china, and other objects of *vertu* ; he was very curious in snuff boxes, and had a collection of great beauty and value : as also of canes.

(W. Jesse)



Brummell was the supreme dictator at Watiers [a gambling club] . . . laying down the law in dress, in manners, and in those magnificent snuff boxes, for which there was a rage ; he fomented the excesses, ridiculed the scruples, patronised the novices, and exercised paramount dominion over all. He had . . . great success at Macao, winning in two or three years large sums. . . . During the height of his prosperity, I remember him coming in one night after the opera to Watiers, and finding the Macao table full, one place at which was occupied by Tom Sheridan, who was never in the habit of play, but having dined freely had dropped into the Club, and was trying to catch the smiles of Fortune by risking

a few pounds which he could ill afford to lose. Brummell proposed to him to give up his place, and go shares in his deal ; and adding to the £10 in counters, which Tom had before him, £200 for himself, took the cards. He dealt with his usual success, and in less than ten minutes won £1,500. He then stopped, made a fair division, and giving £750 to Sheridan, said to him, " There, Tom, go home and give your wife and brats a supper, and never play again." I mention the anecdote as characteristic of the times, the set, and of a spirit of liberality in Brummell, with all the faults he possessed, and which was shown towards an old friend in a way that left no pretext for refusal.

(Thomas Raikes)



Shortly after Beau Brummell fell into disgrace with the Prince Regent, and was dismissed from the society of Carlton House, he was riding with another gentleman in the Park, when the Prince met them. His Royal Highness stopped to speak to Brummell's companion—the Beau continued to jog on—and when the other dandy rejoined him, asked with an air of sovereign indifference, " Who is your fat friend ? " Such, at least, was the story that went the round of the newspapers at the time, and highly tickled Sir Walter [Scott's] fancy. I have heard that nobody enjoyed so much as the Prince of Wales himself an earlier specimen of the Beau's assurance. Taking offence at some part of His Royal High-

ness's conduct or demeanour, " Upon my word," observed Mr. Brummell, " if this kind of thing goes on, I shall be obliged to cut Wales, and bring the old King into fashion."

(John Gibson Lockhart)



He commenced his career in the 10th Light Dragoons, where his agreeable manners soon attracted the attention of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, colonel of the regiment, which ushered him at once into the highest and most distinguished society of the day. By degrees he became a constant inmate of Carlton House and of the Pavilion [at Brighton], was introduced to the Prince's private friends, and admitted by him into the greatest intimacy.

He afterwards left the army, and lived in a house in Chesterfield-street ; where, as he has often told me, the Prince would come in the morning to see his toilette, and would sit there so late, that he would send away his horses, and insist on Brummell giving him a quiet dinner, which generally ended in a deep potation.

This violent intimacy, notwithstanding the disparity of rank, lasted for some years ; till at length, in an unguarded moment of inebriety, he risked some freedom of speech to his royal patron—it was said, " George, ring the bell " ; but this Brummell himself always denied. The result, however, was an immediate rupture, and the Prince never spoke to him again. There was

no excuse to be made for his indiscretion, but it produced a rancour on the other side which lasted to the tomb.

The ridiculous part of the story is, that Brummell took the matter up in a high tone, and waged open war against his royal enemy, assailing him with ridicule in all quarters, and affecting to say, that *he* had cut the connection.

Poor Brummell, what a fate was his !* He was in his time the very glass of fashion, every one from the highest to the lowest conspired to spoil him ; and who that knew him well could deny that with all his faults, he was still the most gentlemanlike and agreeable of companions ? Never was there a man who during his career had such unbounded influence, and what is seldom the case, such general popularity in society. Without being a man of intrigue, for I never knew him engaged in what is called a *liaison* in society, he was the idol of the women—happy was she in whose opera box he would pass an hour, at whose table he would dine, or whose assembly he would honour, and why ? Not only because he was a host of amusement in himself with his jokes and his jeers, but because he was such a favourite with the men, that all were anxious then to join the party.

(*Thomas Raikes*)

* In the end Beau Brummell was forced to take refuge from his creditors, in France. He died, in miserable circumstances, at Caen, in Normandy, in 1840.

EDMUND BURKE (1729-1797)

He is tall, his figure is noble, his air commanding, his address graceful ; his voice is clear, penetrating, sonorous and powerful ; his language is copious, various, and eloquent ; his manners are attractive, his conversation is delightful. . . . Since we lost Garrick I have seen nobody so enchanting.

(*Fanny Burney, 1782*)



Burke is the only man whose common conversation corresponds with the general fame which he has in the world. Take up whatever topic you please, he is ready to meet you. . . . His stream of mind is perpetual. . . . Burke's talk is the ebullition of his mind ; he does not talk from a desire of distinction, but because his mind is full.

(*Dr. Johnson*)



Once, when Johnson was ill and unable to exert himself as much as usual without fatigue, Mr. Burke having been mentioned, he said, " That fellow calls forth all my powers. Were I to see Burke now it would kill me." So much was he accustomed to consider conversation as a contest, and such was his notion of Burke as an opponent.

(*James Boswell*)

Who, too deep for his hearers, still went on
refining
And thought of convincing while they thought
of dining.

(Oliver Goldsmith)



If he were to put all the political information which he had learned from books, all which he had gained from science, and all which any knowledge of the world and its affairs had taught him, into one scale, and the improvement which he had derived from his right hon. friend's instruction and conversation in the other, he should be at a loss to decide to which to give the preference.

(Charles James Fox)

ROBERT BURNS (1759-1796)

Burns had the most glorious eyes imaginable.

(J. G. Lockhart)



His person was strong and robust: his manners rustic, not clownish; the sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect perhaps from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. . . . I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I would have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious farmer of the old Scotch school—i.e. none of your modern agriculturists, who keep labourers for their drudgery, but the *douce gude*man who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large and of a dark cast, and glowed (I say literally *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in the human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate

to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted, nor did I ever see him again, except in the street, where he did not recognise me, as I could not expect he should.

(*Sir Walter Scott*)



The poems [printed at Kilmarnock in 1786] were received with favour, even with rapture in Ayrshire, and ere long over the adjoining counties. "Old and young," thus speaks Robert Heron, "high and low, grave and gay, learned and ignorant, were alike delighted, agitated and transported. I was at this time a resident in Galloway, contiguous to Ayrshire, and I can well remember how even ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~poor~~ ^{poor} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~maidservants~~ ^{maidservants} would have gladly bestowed the wages they earned most hardly, and which they wanted to purchase necessary clothing, if they might but procure the works of Burns."

(*J. G. Lockhart*)



The attentions he received from all ranks and descriptions of persons [in Edinburgh] were such as would have turned any head but his own. I cannot say that I could perceive any unfavourable effect which they left on his mind. He retained the same simplicity of manner and appearance which had struck me so forcibly when I first saw him in the country ; nor did he seem to feel any

additional self-importance from the number and rank of his new acquaintance.

(Dugald Stewart)



From the time when he entered on his Excise duties, the poet more and more neglected the concerns of his farm. Occasionally he might be seen holding the plough, an exercise in which he excelled, and was proud of excelling, or stalking down his furrows, with the white sheet of grain wrapped about him, a “tenty seedsman”; but he was more commonly occupied in far different pursuits. “I am now,” says he, in one of his letters, “a poor rascally gauger, condemned to gallop two hundred miles every week, to inspect dirty ponds and yeasty barrels.”

. . . In his perpetual perambulations over the moors of Dumfriesshire [he] had every temptation to encounter which bodily fatigue, the blandishments of hosts and hostesses, and the habitual manners of those who acted along with him in the duties of the Excise, could present. He was, moreover, wherever he went, exposed to perils of his own, by the reputation which he had earned as a poet, and by his extraordinary powers of entertainment in conversation. . . . From the castle to the cottage, every door flew open at his approach; and the old system of hospitality, then flourishing, rendered it difficult for the most soberly inclined guest to rise from any man’s board in the same trim that he sat down to it.

The farmer, if Burns were seen passing, left his reapers and trotted by the side of Jenny Geddes until he could persuade the bard that the day was hot enough to demand an extra libation. If he entered an inn at midnight, after all the inmates were in bed, the news of his arrival circulated from the cellar to the garret ; and ere ten minutes had elapsed, the landlord and all his guests were assembled round the ingle, the largest punch-bowl was produced, and

“ Be ours this night—who knows what comes
to-morrow ? ”

was the language of every eye in the circle that welcomed him.

The stateliest gentry of the county, whenever they had especial ~~merriment~~ in view, called in the wit and eloquence of Burns to enliven their carousals.

(J. G. Lockhart)

GEORGE GORDON

6th Lord Byron (1788-1824)

His eyes, though of a light grey, were capable of all extremes of expression, from the most joyous hilarity to the deepest sadness, from the very sunshine of benevolence to the most concentrated scorn or rage. . . . But it was in the mouth and chin that the great beauty as well as expression of his fine countenance lay. "Many pictures have been painted of him," says a fair critic of his features, "with various success ; but the excessive beauty of his lips escaped every painter and sculptor. In their ceaseless play they represented every emotion, whether pale with anger, curled in disdain, smiling in triumph, or dimpled with archness and love." . . . His head was remarkably small—so much so as to be rather out of proportion with his face. The forehead, though a little too narrow, was high, but appeared more so from his having his hair (to preserve it, as he said) shaved over the temples ; while the glossy dark-brown curls, clustering over his head, gave the finish to his beauty. When to this is added that his nose, though handsomely was rather thickly shaped, that his teeth were white and regular, and his complexion colourless, as good an idea perhaps as it is in the power of mere words to convey may be conceived of his features.

(Thomas Moore)

The prints give one no impression of him—the lustre is there, but it is not lighted up. Byron's countenance is *a thing to dream of*. A certain fair lady, whose name has been too often mentioned in connexion with him, told a friend of mine that, when she first saw Byron it was in a crowded room, and she did not know who it was, but her eyes were instantly nailed, and she said to herself *that pale face is my fate*. And, poor soul, if a godlike face, and godlike powers could have made any excuse for devilry, to be sure she had one.

(*Sir Walter Scott*)



The embittering circumstance of his life—that which haunted him like a curse amidst the buoyancy of youth and the anticipations of fame and pleasure was, strange to say, the trifling deformity of his foot. By that one blemish (as in his moments of melancholy he persuaded himself) all the blessings that nature had showered upon him were counterbalanced.

(*Thomas Moore*)



On comparing notes with Moore, I was confirmed in one or two points which I have always laid down in considering poor Byron. One was, that like Rousseau, he was apt to be very suspicious, and a plain downright steadiness of manner was the true mode to maintain his good

opinion. Will Rose told me that once, while sitting with Byron, he fixed insensibly his eye on his feet, one of which, it must be remembered, was deformed. Looking up suddenly, he saw Byron regarding him with a look of concentrated and deep displeasure, which wore off when he observed no consciousness or embarrassment in the countenance of Rose. Murray after explained this by telling Rose that Lord Byron was very jealous of having this personal imperfection noticed or attended to.

(Sir Walter Scott)



The first time I saw Lord Byron, he was rehearsing the part of Leander, under the auspices of Mr. Jackson, the prize-fighter. It was in the river Thames, before his first visit to Greece. There used to be a bathing-machine stationed on the eastern side of Westminster Bridge ; and I had been bathing, and was standing on this machine adjusting my clothes, when I noticed a respectable-looking manly person, who was eyeing something at a distance. This was Mr. Jackson waiting for his pupil. The latter was swimming with somebody for a wager. I forgot what his tutor said of him ; but he spoke in terms of praise. I saw nothing in Lord Byron at that time, but a young man who, like myself, had written a bad volume of poems ; and though I had a sympathy with him on this account, and more respect for his rank than I was willing to

suppose, my sympathy was not an agreeable one ; so, contenting myself with seeing his lordship's head bob up and down in the water, like a buoy, I came away.

(*Leigh Hunt*)



We expect Lord Byron here in about a fortnight. I have just taken the finest palace in Pisa for him, and his luggage, and his horses, and all his train, are, I believe, already on their way hither. I daresay you have heard of the life he led at Venice, rivalling the wise Solomon almost, in the number of his concubines. Well, he is now quite reformed, and is leading a sober and decent life, as cavaliere servente to a very pretty Italian woman [Contessa Guiccioli] who has already arrived at Pisa, with her father and her brother (such are the manners of Italy), as the jackals of the lion.

(*P. B. Shelley, 1821*)



I have heard hundreds and thousands of people who never saw him [Lord Byron] rant about him : but I never heard a single expression of fondness for him fall from the lips of any of those who knew him well. Yet, even now, after the lapse of five-and-twenty years, there are those who cannot talk for a quarter of an hour about Charles Fox without tears.

(*Lord Macaulay, 1831*)

It was about six o'clock on the evening of this day [18th April, 1824] when he said, "Now I shall go to sleep"; and then turning round fell into that slumber from which he never awoke.

. . . To attempt to describe how the intelligence of this sad event struck upon all hearts would be as difficult as it is superfluous. He, whom the whole world was to mourn, had on the tears of Greece peculiar claim—for it was at her feet he now laid down the harvest of such a life of fame. To the people of Missolonghi, who first felt the shock that was soon to spread through all Europe, the event seemed almost incredible. It was but the other day that he had come among them, radiant with renown—inspiring faith by his very name, in those miracles of success that were about to spring forth at the touch of his ever-powerful genius. All this had now vanished like a short dream: nor can we wonder that the poor Greeks, to whom his coming had been such a glory, and who, on the last evening of his life, thronged the streets, enquiring as to his state, should regard the thunder-storm which, at the moment he died, broke over the town, as a signal of his doom, and, in their superstitious grief, cry to each other, "The great man is gone!"

(Thomas Moore)

■ GEOFFREY CHAUCER (? 1340-1400)

(In the *Canterbury Tales*, after the Prioress had told her story, the Host addressed merry words to Chaucer, giving the only description of the Poet that exists.)

When seyde was al this miracle, every man
As sobre was, that wonder was to see,
Til that our hoste jopen tho bigan,
And than at erst he loked up-on me,
And seyde thus, "what man artow?" quod
he;

"Thou lokest as thou woldest find an hare,
For ever up-on the ground I see thee stare.

"Approche neer, and loke up merrily
Now war yow, sirs, and lat this man have
place;

He in the waast is shape as wel as I;
This were a popet in an arm t'enbrace
For any womman, smal and fair of face,
He seemeth elvish by his countenance,
For un-to no wight dooth he daliance.

"Sey now somewhat, sin other folk hav sayd;
Tel us a tale of mirthe, and that anon;"
"Hoste," quod I, "ne beth nat yvel apayd,
For other tale certes can I noon,
But of a ryme I lerned longe agoon."

"Ye, that is good," quod he; "now shal
we here

Som deyntee thing, me thinketh by his
chere."

(Chaucer, on himself)

(Then Chaucer begins the Tale of St. Thopas.)

PHILIP DORMER STANHOPE
4th Earl of Chesterfield (1694-1773)

His manner was exquisitely elegant.

(*Dr. Johnson*)



Johnson . . . did not refrain from expressing himself concerning that nobleman [Lord Chesterfield] with pointed freedom : “ This man (said he) I thought had been a Lord among wits ; but, I find, he is only a wit among Lords ! ”

(*James Boswell*)



Vanity, or call it by a gentler name, the desire of admiration and applause, is the most universal principle of human actions. . . . I will fairly own that I had that vanity, that weakness, if it be one, to a prodigious degree ; what is more, I confess it without reluctance : nay, I am glad I had it ; since, if I have had the good fortune to please in the world, it is to that powerful and active principle that I owe it. I began the world, not with a bare desire, but with an insatiable thirst, a rage of popularity, applause, and admiration. If this made me do some silly things, on one hand, it made me, on the other hand, do almost all the right things I did : it made me attentive and civil to the women I disliked, and to the men I despised, in hopes of the applause of both ; though I neither desired, nor would I have accepted, the favours of the one, nor the friendship

of the other. I always dressed, looked, and talked my best, and, I own, was overjoyed whenever I perceived that by all three, or by one of them, the company was pleased with me. To men, I talked whatever I thought would give them the best opinion of my parts and learning, and to women, what I was sure would please them—flattery, gallantry, and love. And, moreover, I will own to you, under the secrecy of confession, that my vanity has very often made me take great pains to make many a woman in love with me, if I could, for whose person I would not have given a pinch of snuff. In company with men, I always endeavoured to out-shine, or, at least if possible, to equal, the most shining man in it. This desire elicited whatever powers I had to gratify it; and where I could not perhaps shine in the first, enabled me, at least, to shine in a second or third sphere. By these means I soon grew in fashion; and when a man is once in fashion, all he does is right. It was infinite pleasure to me, to find my own fashion and popularity. I was sent for to all parties of pleasure, both of men or women, where, in some measure, I gave the tone. This gave me the reputation of having had some women of condition; and that reputation, whether true or false, really got me others. With the men I was a Proteus, and assumed every shape in order to please them all: among the gay I was the gayest among the grave the gravest; and I never omitted the least attentions of good-breeding, or the least offices of friendship, that could either



EARL OF CHESTERFIELD
From an engraving

please, or attach them to me, and accordingly I was soon connected with all the men of any fashion or figure in town.

To this principle of vanity, which philosophers call a mean one, and which I do not, I owe great part of the figure which I have made in life.

(Lord Chesterfield himself, in a letter to his son)



. . . The grosser immoralities he affects to speak of with abhorrence ; but such as might be practised without the loss of health and reputation he seemed to think there was no law against. He was therefore, if secret, vain in his amours, and though, setting aside his mien, his person had little to recommend it, for he was low of stature, had coarse features, and a cadaverous complexion. . . . He was also long-visaged and long-necked, but from the shoulders to the waist very short.

A lady of high quality . . . having been married some few years but never having brought her lord a child, was surprised one morning by a visit from Lord Chesterfield, whom she had frequently seen and conversed with at court. After the usual compliments had passed, his lordship in that easy gay style which he so strongly recommends to his son, gave her to understand, that he should be happy to form such a connection with her ladyship, as it was more than probable might give being to an heir to the honours and possessions of that noble family into which she had

matched. I will not attempt to describe the indignation which the lady felt at such an unexampled instance of impudence as the proposal indicated. She rose from her chair, and with all the dignity of insulted modesty, commanded this well-bred lover, this minion of the graces, to quit her house, with this menace, "Think yourself well off, my lord, that for this affront I do not order my servants to push you headlong out of doors."

(*Sir John Hawkins*)



He expired on the forenoon of the 24th of March, 1773, and in the 79th year of his age, of a slow and gradual decay. . . . His intimate friend, Mr. Dayrolles, had called to see him only half an hour before it happened, when the Earl, from his bed, gasped out in a faint voice to his *valet de chambre* : "Give Dayrolles a chair." His physician, Dr. Warren, who was present, afterwards expressed himself as much struck at these, the last words he was heard to speak. "His good breeding," said Dr. Warren, "only quits him with his life !"

(*Lord Mahon*)

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

(1772-1834)

Coleridge was as little fitted for action as Lamb, but on a different account. His person was of a good height, but as sluggish and solid as the other's was light and fragile. He had, perhaps, suffered it to look old before its time, for want of exercise. His hair was white at fifty ; and as he generally dressed in black, and had a very tranquil demeanour, his appearance was gentlemanly, and for several years before his death was reverend. Nevertheless, there was something invincibly young in the look of his face. It was round and fresh-coloured, with agreeable features, and an open, indolent, good-natured mouth. This boy-like expression was very becoming in one who dreamed and speculated as he did when he was really a boy, and who passed his life apart from the rest of the world, with a book, and his flowers. His forehead was prodigious—a great piece of placid marble ; and his fine eyes, in which all the activity of his mind seemed to concentrate, moved under it with a sprightly ease, as if it was pastime to them to carry all that thought.

(Leigh Hunt)



“ Charles,” said Coleridge to Lamb, “ I think you have heard me preach ? ”

“ I n-n-never heard you do anything else,” replied Lamb.

(B. W. Procter, “ *Barry Cornwall* ”)

In his mature age (when I knew him) Coleridge had a full round face, a fine broad forehead, rather thick lips, and strange dreamy eyes ; which were often lighted up by eagerness, but wanted concentration, and were adapted apparently for musing or speculation, rather than for precise, or rapid judgment. Yet he was very shrewd as well as eloquent ; was (slightly) addicted to jesting ; and would talk “ at sight ” upon any subject with extreme fluency and much knowledge. “ His white hair,” in Lamb’s words, “ shrouded a capacious brain.” Coleridge had browsed and expatiated over all the rich regions of literature ; at home and abroad. In youth, his studies had, in the first instance, been mainly in theology, he having selected the Church for his profession. Although he was educated in the creed and rites of the Church of England, he became for a time an Unitarian preacher, and scattered his eloquent words over many human audiences. He was fond of questions of logic, and of explaining his systems and opinions by means of diagrams ; but his projects were seldom consummated ; and his talk (sometimes) and his prose writing (often) were tedious and diffuse.

(*B. W. Procter*)



From London, on the 5th August, I went to Highgate, and wrote a note to Mr. Coleridge, requesting leave to pay my respects to him. It was near noon. Mr. Coleridge sent a verbal

message, that he was in bed, but if I would call after one o'clock, he would see me. I returned at one, and he appeared, a short, thick old man, with bright blue eyes and fine clear complexion, leaning on his cane. He took snuff freely, which presently soiled his cravat and neat black suit. . . . I was in his company about an hour, but find it impossible to recall the largest part of his discourse, which was often like so many printed paragraphs in his book—perhaps the same—so readily did he fall into certain commonplaces. As I might have foreseen, the visit was rather a spectacle than a conversation, of no use beyond the satisfaction of my curiosity. He was old and preoccupied, and could not bend to a new companion and think with him.

(Ralph Waldo Emerson, in 1833)

JOHN CONSTABLE, R.A. (1776-1837)

His father would have educated him for the Church, but finding him disinclined to the necessary duties, he determined to make a miller of him. For about a year, Constable was employed in his father's mills, where he performed the duties required of him carefully and well. He was remarkable among the young men of the village for muscular strength, and being tall and well formed, with good features, a fresh complexion, and fine dark eyes, his white hat and coat were not unbecoming to him, and he was called in the neighbourhood the "handsome miller." . . . His acquaintance with the picturesque machinery both of wind and water-mills was very useful to him in after life.



audiences. inter seasons, after he could afford it, In the winter frequently sent clothes and blankets Constable frequently sent clothes and blankets to be distributed among the poor of his native village ; indeed no feature of his character was more amiable than his sympathy with the sufferings of the humblest classes, and his consideration for their feelings in all respects. He possessed that innate, and only real gentility, of which the test is conduct towards inferiors and strangers ; he was a gentleman to the poorest of his species—a gentleman in a stage coach, nay more, a gentleman at a stage coach inn, dinner.

I have seen him admire a fine tree with an ecstasy of delight like that with which he would catch up a beautiful child in his arms. The ash was his favourite, and all who are acquainted with his pictures cannot fail to have observed how frequently it is introduced as a near object, and how beautifully its distinguishing peculiarities are marked.

(*C. R. Leslie, R.A.*)



. . . The sound of water escaping from mill dams, etc., willows, old rotten planks, slimy posts and brickwork, I love such things. Shakespeare could make everything poetical ; he tells us of poor Tom's haunts among "sheep cotes and mills." As long as I do paint, I shall never cease to paint such places. They have always been my delight. . . . I associate "my careless boyhood" with all that lies on the banks of the Stour ; those scenes made me a painter, and I am grateful.

(*Constable, on himself*)

OLIVER CROMWELL (1599-1658)

The first time that ever I took notice of him was in the very beginning of the Parliament held in November 1640, when I vainly thought myself a courtly young Gentleman (for we Courtiers valued ourselves much upon our good clothes) : I came one morning into the House well clad, and perceived a Gentleman speaking (whom I knew not) very ordinarily apparelled ; for it was a plain cloth-suit, which seemed to have been made by an ill country-tailor ; his linen was plain, and not very clean ; and I remember a speck or two of blood upon his little band, which was not much larger than his collar ; his hat was without a hat-band ; his stature was of a good size, his sword stuck close to his side, his countenance swollen and reddish, his voice sharp and untuneable, and his eloquence full of fervour. . . .

(Sir Philip Warwick)



His body was well-built, compact and strong, his stature under six feet (I believe about two inches), his head so shaped as you might see it a storehouse and shop both of a vast treasury of natural parts. His temper exceeding fiery, as I have known, but the flame of it kept down for the most part, or soon allayed by those moral endowments he had. He was naturally compassionate towards objects in distress, even to an effeminate

measure ; though God had made him a heart, wherein was left little room for any fear, but what was due to Himself, of which there was a large proportion. Yet did he exceed in tenderness towards sufferers. A larger soul, I think, hath seldom dwelt in a house of clay than his was.

(John Maidston)



When he appeared first in the Parliament, he seemed to have a person in no degree gracious, no ornament of discourse, none of those talents which used to reconcile the affections of the standers by : yet as he grew into place and authority, his parts seemed to be renewed, as if he had concealed faculties till he had occasion to use them ; and when he was to act the part of a great man, he did it without any indecency through the want of custom.

(Earl of Clarendon)



I saw him dead : a leaden slumber lies,
And mortal sleep over those wakeful eyes ;
Those gentle rays under the lids were fled,
Which through his looks that piercing sweetness
shed ;
That port, which so majestic was and strong,
Loose, and deprived of vigour, stretched along ;
All withered, all discoloured, pale and wan. . . .

(Andrew Marvell)

22nd October 1658. Saw the superb funeral of the Protector from Somerset-House in a velvet bed of state, drawn by six horses, housed with the same ; the pall held by his new Lords ; Oliver lying in effigy, in royal robes, and crowned with a crown, sceptre, and globe, like a king. The pendants and guidons were carried by the officers of the army ; the Imperial banners, achievements, etc., by the heralds in their coats ; a rich caparisoned horse, embroidered all over with gold ; a knight of honour, armed *cap-a-pie*, and, after all, his guards, soldiers, and innumerable mourners. In this equipage, they proceeded to Westminster : but it was the joyfulest funeral I ever saw ; for there were none that cried but dogs, which the soldiers hooted away with a barbarous noise, drinking and taking tobacco in the streets as they went.

(*John Evelyn*)



The supreme excellence of his character, and his supreme worthiness of all praise.

(*John Milton*)

GEORGE NATHANIEL

Marquess Curzon (1859-1925)

A puzzling and intriguing personality. Born with the proverbial silver spoon in his mouth and endowed with superior natural gifts, he set himself assiduously from the first to improve his material prospects and to enhance the usefulness of his talents. By study and much travel and by a laborious devotion to public affairs he had become, by the time he reached high and responsible office, the best-informed and perhaps the most generally accomplished British statesman of his time.

His appearance was that of a magnificent majordomo, with the requisite touch of pomposity. He was, in fact, pompous, and confessed it—a confession that revealed his admirable sense of humour. He could be humorous at moments when he was suffering severe physical pain from the spinal malady that persisted throughout his latter days and that necessitated the use of stays to support his figure. Yet he was easily capable of making himself ridiculous. During his term of office as Secretary for Foreign Affairs, a range of cartoons by an eminent artist was installed, notwithstanding his angry protests, in the wall spaces at the head of the grand staircase of the Foreign Office. (They had been arranged for during the reign of a previous Secretary of State.) Lord Curzon persisted in his objections

to the end, and when they were eventually in place, by the direction of the Cabinet, he forsook the grand staircase and made his stately exits from the Office by staircases intended for less illustrious footsteps. The "Purple Emperor" in high dudgeon was a curious and somewhat disconcerting spectacle.

I have spoken of his devotion to public affairs and, I will add, to public duty. This was with him the ruling passion. He made it his business to deal with and to dispose of each day all the matters of detail belonging to the day in question—the foreign telegrams, the files, the reports and the memoranda that pursued him relentlessly in pouches and red boxes. No matter how voluminous the papers, how late the hour, or how ill-fitted he might be from reasons of health, he slaved at his task and would take no rest until he had finished it.

He was a fine speaker—incidentally, a delightful after-dinner speaker—with an admirable command of classic English. The same quality marked everything he wrote. The hasty memoranda he drafted for the Cabinet of his official talks with Ambassadors and Ministers were models of composition, as were even the letters, in his large flowing hand, with which he favoured, abundantly, his friends and his colleagues in office.

He was ravenous of office. He would, I believe, have accepted the Secretaryship for Foreign Affairs under any administration and on

almost any terms. He even found it possible to endure the subordination of the Foreign Office under his direction to 10, Downing Street. In the end, he was baulked of the supreme ambition of a life crowded with honours. On grounds of seniority, of eminence in his party and of distinction in public service he had reason to look forward with confidence to the Premiership. Faults of temper and of manner, and by no means any lack of political abilities of a high order, robbed him of the great prize just as it seemed within his eager grasp.

That Lord Curzon was widely unpopular cannot be denied, and he was charged with many defects of character, often mistakenly. It was alleged against him, for example, that he was careful in money matters to the point of stinginess. How unjust was this accusation at least was demonstrated in noble fashion by his gifts to the nation of the castles of Bodiam and Tattershall.

(C. H.)

THOMAS DE QUINCEY

(1785-1859)

It was in the autumn of the year 1840 that I first saw Thomas de Quincey. At that period, much of my time was taken up in connection with "Hogg's Instructor," and owing to an accident that had occurred in our printing-office, we had partially betaken ourselves to temporary and somewhat out-of-the-way premises at Canon-mills, in the vicinity of Edinburgh. As I was attending to some matters in this office, I was informed that a gentleman urgently wished to see me. Going down, I was confronted by a noticeably small figure, attired in a capacious garment which was much too large, and which served the purpose of both under and overcoat. Although I was well acquainted with the fame and writings of Thomas de Quincey, and had read accounts of his personal appearance, the figure now before me failed to realise the idea I had formed of the English Opium-Eater. It was some time before the extreme refinement of the face was noticed—not, indeed, till the voice, gentle, clear, and silvery, began to be heard; when the eye ceased to be diverted by a certain oddity in the general appearance, and was attracted by the brow which, from its prominence, gave an aspect of almost childlike smallness to the under face, and by the eyes, which combined a singular power of quiet scrutiny with a sort of

dreamy softness that suggested something of weariness.

With an air of quiet good breeding, he told me who he was, and the object of his visit, which was to offer me an article for the "Instructor." He expressed his satisfaction at the manner in which that work had been conducted; said he was pleased with its non-political and non-sectarian character; and, if there was a vacancy on the staff, he would like to become an occasional contributor.

I was much pleased at the offer of the services of so distinguished a writer. The contribution which he had brought with him was forthwith drawn from the capacious inner pocket of his coat; but, before being handed to me, I was both surprised and amused at a small hand-brush being drawn from the same receptacle, and the manuscript carefully brushed before it was handed to me. This operation was one which I afterwards found that he invariably performed. The contribution was then and there accepted.

(James Hogg)



At four o'clock dined in Hall (Middle Temple Hall) with De Quincey who was very civil to me, and cordially invited me to visit his cottage in Cumberland. Like myself he is an enthusiast for Wordsworth. His person is small, his complexion fair, and his air and manner are those of a sickly

and enfeebled man. From this circumstance his sensibility, which I have no doubt is genuine, is in danger of being mistaken for effeminateness. At least coarser and more robustly healthful persons may fall into this mistake.

(H. C. Robinson)



His voice was extraordinary ; it came as if from dream-land ; but it was the most musical and impressive of voices. In convivial life, what then seemed to me the most remarkable trait of De Quincey's character, was the power he possessed of easily changing the tone of ordinary thought and conversation into that of his own dream-land, till his auditors, with wonder, found themselves moving pleasantly along with him in a sphere of which they might have heard and read, perhaps, but which had ever appeared to them inaccessible and far, far away ! Seeing that he was always good-natured and social, he could take part, at commencement, in any sort of tattle or twaddle. The talk might be of " beeves," and he could grapple with them, if expected to do so, but his musical cadences were not in keeping with such work, and in a few minutes (not without some strictly logical sequence), he could escape at will from the beeves to butterflies, and thence to the soul's immortality, to Plato and Kant, and Schelling, and Fichte, to Milton's early years and Shakespeare's sonnets, to Wordsworth and Coleridge,

to Homer and Aeschylus, to St. Thomas of Aquin, St. Basil, and St. Chrysostom. But he by no means excluded them from real life, according to his own views of that life, but would recount profound mysteries from his own experiences—visions that had come over him in his loneliest walks among the mountains, and passages within his own personal knowledge, illustrating, if not proving, the doctrines of dreams, of warnings, of second sight, and mesmerism. And whatever the subject might be, every one of his sentences (or of his chapters, I might say) was woven into the most perfect logical texture, and uttered in a tone of sustained melody.

(*R. P. Gillies*)



After having at this time abstained wholly [from opium] for sixty-one days, he was compelled to return to its moderate use, as life was found to be insupportable; he himself recording afterwards that he resumed its use, on the warrant of his deliberate judgment, as the least of two evils; and there is no further record of any attempt at total abstinence. His indulgences in opium after this date, were, however, very limited.

. . . Some of his peculiar habits, in spite of the loving tendance and care of which he was now the subject, were, however, persevered in. He still sat and wrote at night, refreshing himself

with tea or coffee in large quantity—went to bed in the early hours, woke at midday, and devoted a large part of the time while daylight lasted to wandering about the country, or in the pleasant, lonely lanes in the neighbourhood of his house. Or, if by any chance he was unable thus to gratify himself, he would take compensation by indulging in a starlight ramble. Many, doubtless, are the light-headed country bumpkins, who, returning from adventures of love or whisky, have been scared by his thin light figure in odd habiliment, his feet in list shoes—his favourite wear—advancing silently and suddenly upon them in the darkness.

(*"H. A. Page"* (A. H. Yapp))



My father's habits were simple, almost to asceticism. From the neuralgic suffering, which led to his first taking opium, he early lost all his teeth ; and, from the extreme delicacy of his system, he could eat nothing less capable of perfect mastication than bread, so that only too often a little soup or coffee was his whole dinner. He was able to take very little wine, even according to the standard of the present day. His dress, unfortunately, he neither cared for himself, nor would he let others care for it. I say unfortunately, because this carelessness gave rise among punctilious people, unaccustomed to eccentric habits, to an impression of poverty for which

there was no foundation. It might be that a thought occurred to him in the midst of some of his irregular processes of dressing or undressing (I should say, some thought generally did strike him at that time), and he would stop with his coat just taken off or not put on, without stockings at all, or with one off and one on, and becoming lost in what grew out of this thought, he would work on for hours, hardly even noticing the coffee, which was his chief support at such times. In the midst of this absorbing work, would arrive visitors, of whom there were many, probably from such a distance that they could not be turned back within sight of the object of their long pilgrimage; upon which my father, with the unaffected courtesy which was one of the great charms of his character, would appear at once, rather than keep them waiting while he put on the other stocking, or whatever might be wanting, or, which was just as likely, in the wrong place.

(Mrs. Baird Smith)

CHARLES DICKENS (1812-1870)

Very different was his face in those days (in 1837) from that which photography has made familiar to the present generation. A look of youthfulness first attracted you, and then a candour and openness of expression which made you sure of the qualities within. The features were very good. He had a capital forehead, a firm nose with full wide nostril, eyes wonderfully beaming with intellect and running over with humour and cheerfulness, and a rather prominent mouth strongly marked with sensibility. The head was altogether well-formed and symmetrical, and the air and carriage of it were extremely spirited. The hair so scant and grizzled in later days was then of a rich brown and most luxuriant abundance, and the bearded face of his last two decades had hardly a vestige of hair or whisker ; but there was that in the face as I first recollect it which no time could change and which remained implanted on it unalterably to the last. This was the quickness, keenness, and practical power, the eager, restless, energetic outlook on each several feature, that seemed to tell so little of a student or writer of books and so much of a man of action and business in the world. Light and motion flashed from every part of it. *It was as if made of steel*, was said of it, four or five years after the time to which I am referring, by a most original and delicate observer, the late

Mrs. Carlyle. "What a face is his to meet in a drawing-room!" wrote Leigh Hunt to me, the morning after I had made them known to each other. "It has the life and soul in it of fifty human beings." In such sayings are expressed not alone the restless and resistless vivacity and force of which I have spoken, but that also which lay beneath them of steadiness and hard endurance.

(John Forster)



He is a fine little fellow—Boz, I think. Clear blue, intelligent eyes, eyebrows that he arches amazingly, large protrusive rather loose mouth, a face of most extreme *mobility* which he shuttles about—eyebrows, eyes, mouth and all—in a very singular manner while speaking. Surmount this with a loose coil of common-coloured hair, and set it on a small compact figure, very small, and dressed *a la* D'Orsay rather than well—this is Pickwick. For the rest, a quiet, shrewd-looking, little fellow, who seems to guess pretty well what he is and others are.

(Thomas Carlyle, 1840)



I met him [Charles Dickens] last week at a dinner at John Forster's. I had never even seen him before, for he never goes now into fashionable society. . . .

His hair is not much grizzled, and is thick,

although the crown of his head is getting bald. His features are good, the nose rather high, the eyes largish, greyish and expressive. He wears a moustache and beard, and dresses at dinner in exactly the same uniform which every man in London or the civilized world is bound to wear, as much as the inmates of a penitentiary are restricted to theirs. I mention this because I had heard that he was odd and extravagant in his costume. I liked him exceedingly. We sat next each other at table and I found him genial, sympathetic, agreeable, unaffected, with plenty of light easy talk and touch-and-go fun without any effort or humbug of any kind

(*J. L. Motley, 1861*)



It was at this time that John Forster called upon me to paint a portrait of his friend Dickens. I need scarcely say with what delight, mixed with fear, I heard of this commission—delight because of my veneration for the author, and my love for the man ; fear that I might fail, as so many had done already. Forster had hinted his wish to me a year or two before, when Dickens had adopted a moustache—a hirsute appendage of which Forster had a great horror ; and with reason, as regarded Dickens, for it partly covered, and certainly injured a very handsome and characteristic mouth. “ This is a whim—the fancy will pass. We will wait till the hideous disfigurement is removed,” said Forster ; but we waited in vain.

Indeed, we waited till the beard was allowed to grow upon the chin as well as upon the upper lip, so, fearing that if we waited longer there would be little of the face to be painted, if whiskers were to be added to the rest, the order was given and the portrait begun.

(*W. P. Frith, R.A.*)



I was very much attached to Charles Dickens ; there was a brightness and geniality about him that greatly fascinated his companions. His laugh was so cheery, and he seemed so thoroughly to enter into the feelings of those around him. . . . No man possessed more sincere friends, or deserved them better.

(*Sergeant Ballantine*)



The good, the gentle, high-gifted, ever-friendly, noble Dickens,—every inch of him an honest man.

(*Thomas Carlyle*)

JOHN DONNE (1573-1631)

He was of a stature moderately tall ; and of a straight and equally-proportioned body, to which all his words and actions gave an unexpressible addition of comeliness. The melancholy and pleasant humour were in him so contempered, that each gave advantage to the other, and made his company one of the delights of mankind. His fancy was unimitably high, equalled only by his great wit ; both being made useful by a commanding judgment. His aspect was cheerful, and such as gave a silent testimony of a clear knowing soul, and of a conscience at peace with itself. His melting eye showed that he had a soft heart, full of noble compassion ; of too brave a soul to offer injuries, and too much a Christian not to pardon them in others. . . . He was by nature highly passionate, but more apt to reluct at the excesses of it. A great lover of the offices of humanity, and of so merciful a spirit, that he never beheld the miseries of mankind without pity and relief.

(Izaak Walton)



My Doctor [Dr. Donne] is an honest man . . . and I always rejoice when I think that by my means he became a Divine.

(King James I)



In this time of sadness [following the death of his wife] he was importuned by the grave

Benchers of Lincoln's Inn—who were once the companions and friends of his youth—to accept of their Lecture which . . . was then void ; of which he accepted, being most glad to renew his intermitted friendship with those whom he had so much loved, and where he had been a Saul—though not to persecute Christianity, or to deride it, yet in his irregular youth to neglect the visible practice of it,—there to become a Paul, and preach salvation to his beloved brethren. . . . The love of that noble Society was expressed to him in many ways ; for, besides fair lodgings that were set apart, and newly furnished for him with all necessaries, other courtesies were also daily added ; indeed so many and so freely, as if they meant their gratitude should exceed his merits : and in this love-strife of desert and liberality, they continued for the space of two years, he preaching faithfully and constantly to them, and they liberally requiting him.



. . . About a year after his return out of Germany, Dr. Carey was made Bishop of Exeter, and by his removal the Deanery of St. Paul's being vacant, the King [James I] sent to Dr. Donne, and appointed him to attend him at dinner the next day. When his Majesty was sat down, before he had eat any meat, he said after his pleasant manner, " Dr. Donne, I have invited you to dinner ; and though you sit not down

with me, yet will I carve to you of a dish that I know you love well ; for, knowing you love London, I do therefore make you Dean of St. Paul's ; and when I have dined, then do you take your beloved dish home to your study, say grace there to yourself, and much good may it do you."



It is truth that in his penitential years, viewing some of those pieces [among his early poems] that had been loosely—God knows, too loosely—scattered in his youth, he wished they had been abortive, or so short-lived that his own eyes had witnessed their funerals : but, though he was no friend to them, he was not so fallen out with heavenly Poetry, as to forsake that ; no, not in his declining age ; witnessed then by many divine Sonnets, and other high, holy, and harmonious composesures.

(Izaak Walton)



[After Donne's death a statue was erected by his friends in old St. Paul's. It survived the Great Fire and was set up in Wren's Cathedral, where it may still be seen.]

"A statue indeed," says Walton, "so like Dr. Donne, that—as his friend Sir Henry Wotton hath expressed himself : ' It seems to breathe faintly, and posterity shall look upon it as a kind of artificial miracle.' "

GEORGE ELIOT (1819-1880)

It was rather an awful moment for the neophyte when he was presented to the quiet and dignified lady seated in her armchair, to stammer out the appropriate remarks which sometimes failed to present themselves before he had to make room for a new comer ; and if the company was numerous, any general conversation was impossible. George Eliot's gentle voice was not calculated, if she had desired such a result, to hold the attention of a roomful of receptive admirers. But if rainy weather had limited the audience, and the tentative sparks of conversation had been fanned into life, she could be as charming as any admirer could desire. Her appearance was intellectually attractive, and had a peculiar pathetic charm. She looked fragile, overweighted perhaps by thought, and with traces of the depression of which she so often complains in her letters. Her abundant hair, auburn-brown, in later years streaked with grey, was covered by a sort of lace mantilla. She could not be called beautiful. She was said to be like Savonarola, of whose face she remarks : " It was strong-featured and owed all its refinement to habits of mind and rigid discipline of the body." His gaze impressed Romola because it was one " in which simple human fellowship expressed itself as a strongly-felt bond." That at least might be applied to George Eliot. Her features

were strongly marked, with a rather large mouth and jaw ; her eyes a grey-blue, with very variable expression ; her hands were finely formed ; her voice low and very musical—a contralto, it is said, in singing ; and the whole appearance expressive of a singular combination of power and intense sensibility. The best likeness is that by her friend Sir Frederick Burton, now in the National Portrait Gallery.

(Leslie Stephen)

ROBERT EMMET (1778-1803)

At the head of this insurrection [the Irish rebellion of 1798] was Robert Emmet, a young gentleman of respectable family, interesting manners, and most extraordinary genius. . . . He was but just twenty-three, had graduated in Trinity College, and was gifted with abilities and virtues which rendered him an object of universal esteem and admiration. Every one loved—every one respected him—his fate made an impression on the University which has not yet been obliterated. His mind was naturally melancholy and romantic—he had fed it from the pure fountain of classic literature, and might be said to have lived, not so much in the scene around him as in the society of the illustrious and sainted dead. The poets of antiquity were his companions—its patriots his models, and its republics his admiration. He had but just entered upon the world, full of the ardour which such studies might be supposed to have excited, and unhappily at a period in the history of his country, when such noble feelings were not only detrimental but dangerous. It is but an ungenerous loyalty which would not weep over the extinction of such a spirit.



. . . A remarkable example of his power both over himself and others occurred at this melancholy moment. He was passing out attended by

the Sheriffs, and preceded by the executioner—in one of the passages stood the turnkey who had been personally assigned to him during his imprisonment : this poor fellow loved him in his heart, and the tears were streaming from his eyes in torrents. Emmet paused for a moment ; his hands were not at liberty—he kissed his cheek—and the man, who had been for years the inmate of a dungeon, habituated to scenes of horror, and hardened against their operation, fell senseless at his feet. Before his eyes had opened again upon this world, those of the youthful sufferer had closed on it for ever. . . .

(Charles Phillips)



Were I to number the men among all I have ever known, who appeared to me to combine, in the greatest degree, pure moral worth with intellectual power, I should, among the highest of the few, place Robert Emmet.

(Thomas Moore)

LORD EDWARD FITZGERALD

(1763-1798)

With Lord Edward I could have no opportunity of forming any acquaintance, but remember (as if it had been but yesterday) having once seen him, in the year 1797, in Grafton Street—when, on being told who he was, as he passed, I ran anxiously after him, desirous of another look at one whose name had, from my school-days, been associated in my mind with all that was noble, patriotic and chivalrous. Though I saw him but this once, his peculiar dress, the elastic lightness of his step, his fresh, healthful complexion, and the soft expression given to his eyes by their long dark eye-lashes, are as present and familiar to my memory as if I had intimately known him.

(Thomas Moore)



Of my lamented and ill-fated friend's excellent qualities I should never tire in speaking. I never knew so lovable a person, and every man in the army, from the general to the drummer, would cheer the expression. His frank and open manner, his universal benevolence, his *gaieté de cœur*, his valour almost chivalrous, and, above all, his unassuming tone, made him the idol of all who served with him. He had great animal

spirits, which bore him up against all fatigue ; but his courage was entirely independent of those spirits—it was a valour *sui generis*.

(Gen. Sir John Doyle)



If you see my dear, dear Edward [then lying mortally wounded in prison], I need not desire you to tell him that I love him with the warmest affection. When I hear of the fortitude with which he has borne his sufferings, I hear no more than what I expected from *him*, though from him only could I have looked for so much.

(Charles James Fox, in a letter to Lord Henry Fitzgerald, 1798)

DAVID GARRICK (1716-1779)

“ Nothing is so fatiguing,” said Mrs. Thrale, “ as the life of a wit : he [Garrick] and Wilkes are the two oldest men of their ages I know ; for they have both worn themselves out, by being eternally on the rack to give entertainment to others.”

“ David, madam,” said the Doctor [Johnson], “ looks much older than he is ; for his face has had double the business of any other man’s ; it is never at rest ; when he speaks one minute, he has quite a different countenance to what he assumes the next ; I don’t believe he ever kept the same look for half an hour together, in the whole course of his life ; and such an eternal, restless, fatiguing play of the muscles must certainly wear out a man’s face before its real time.”

(Fanny Burney, in her Diary)



On the stage he was natural, simple, affecting ;
'Twas only that, when he was off, he was acting.

(Oliver Goldsmith)



I have at last had the entire satisfaction to see Garrick in Hamlet. . . . I pity those who have not. . . . Posterity will never be able to form the slightest idea of his pretensions. . . . I will venture to say it was such an entertainment as will probably never again be exhibited to an admiring

world. . . . To the most eloquent expression of the eye, to the hand-writing of the passions on his features, to a sensibility which tears to pieces the hearts of his auditors, to powers so unparalleled, he adds a judgment of the most exquisite accuracy, the fruit of long experience and close observation, by which he preserves every gradation and transition of the passions, keeping all under the control of a just dependence and natural consistency. . . . So naturally, indeed, do the ideas of the poet seem to mix with his own, that he seemed himself to be engaged in a succession of affecting situations, not giving utterance to a speech, but to the instantaneous expression of his feelings, delivered in the most affecting tones of voice, and with gestures that belong only to nature. It was a fiction as delightful as fancy, and as touching as truth.

(Hannah More)



Garrick was a very good man, the cheerfulest man of his age ; a decent liver in a profession which is supposed to give indulgence to licentiousness ; and a man who gave away, freely, money acquired by himself.

(Dr. Johnson)



My own concern for Mr. Garrick makes me easily comprehend that those who lived with him must be very miserable, for I am one of those,



DAVID GARRICK

From an engraving after Sir Joshua Reynolds

who, in spite of envious abuse of the world, looked upon him in a much higher light than the first genius in his line of life ; I looked upon him as a generous, humane man, whose failings were wonderfully slight when compared with the temptations he has to fail. I can't help also being sorry for the rising generation who will never know what real good acting is, and look upon it as a piece of great good luck I was born in his time.

(Lady Sarah Lennox, 1779)



. . . That stroke of death which has eclipsed the gaiety of nations and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure.

(Dr. Johnson, on the death of Garrick)



Garrick . . . was followed to the Abbey by a long extended train of friends, illustrious for their rank and genius, who truly mourned a man, so perfect in his art, that nature hath not yet produced an actor worthy to be called his second. I saw old Samuel Johnson standing beside his grave, at the foot of Shakespeare's monument, and bathed in tears.

(Richard Cumberland)

JOHN GAY (1685-1732)

You are the most refractory, honest, good-natured man, I have ever known.

(Swift, to Gay, 1727)



Dr. Swift had been observing once to Mr. Gay what an odd pretty sort of thing a Newgate Pastoral might make. Gay was inclined to try at such a thing, for some time, but afterwards thought it would be better to write a comedy on the same plan. This is what gave rise to the Beggar's Opera.

(A. Pope)



One of the nearest and longest ties I have ever had is broken all on a sudden by the unexpected death of poor Mr. Gay. An inflammatory fever hurried him out of this life in three days. . . . He asked for you a few hours before. . . . Would to God the man we have lost had not been so amiable nor so good ; but that's a wish for our sakes, not for his. . . . Good God ! how often are we to die before we quite go off the stage ? In every friend we lose a part of ourselves, and the best part.

(A. Pope, to Swift, Dec. 5th, 1732)

[On the outside of this letter Swift wrote :
“ On my dear friend Mr. Gay's death : Received December 15, but not read until the 20th, by an impulse foreboding some misfortune.”]



EDWARD GIBBON

From an engraving after Sir Joshua Reynolds

EDWARD GIBBON (1737-1794)

Mr. Gibbon, with his usual sneer. . . .

(James Boswell)



His ridiculous face and person.

(Horace Walpole)



On the day I first sat down with [Dr.] Johnson, in his rusty brown, and his black worsteds, Gibbon was placed opposite me in a suit of flowered velvet, with a bag and sword. Each had his measured phraseology. . . . Johnson's style was grand, and Gibbon's elegant ; the stateliness of the former was sometimes pedantic, the polish of the latter was sometimes finical. Johnson marched to kettle-drums and trumpets : Gibbon moved to flutes and haut-boys ; Johnson hewed passages through the Alps, while Gibbon levelled walks through parks and gardens. Mauled as I had been by Johnson, Gibbon poured balm upon my bruises, by condescending, once or twice in the course of the evening, to talk with me ; the great historian was light and playful, suiting his matter to the capacity of the boy ; but it was done *more suo* ; still his mannerism prevailed ; still he tapped his snuff-box ; still he smirked, and smiled, and rounded his periods with the same air of good-breeding, as if he were

conversing with men. His mouth, mellifluous as Plato's, was a round hole, nearly in the centre of his visage.

(George Colman, the Younger)



I am disgusted with the affectation of men of letters, who complain that they have renounced a substance for a shadow, and that their fame (which sometimes is no insupportable weight) affords a poor compensation for envy, censure, and persecution. My own experience at least has taught me a very different lesson ; twenty happy years have been animated by the labour of my history ; and its success has given me a name, a rank, a character, in the World, to which I should not otherwise have been entitled.

(Gibbon, in his Autobiography)

OLIVER GOLDSMITH (1728-1774)

An inspired idiot.

(Horace Walpole)



Who wrote like an angel and talked like poor Poll.

(David Garrick)



It has been generally circulated and believed that he was a mere fool in conversation ; but in truth this has been greatly exaggerated. He had, no doubt, a more than common share of that hurry of ideas which we often find in his countrymen, and which sometimes produces a laughable confusion in expressing them. He was very much what the French call *un étourdi*, and from vanity and an eager desire of being conspicuous wherever he was, he frequently talked carelessly without knowledge of the subject, or even without thought. His person was short, his countenance coarse and vulgar, his deportment that of a scholar awkwardly affecting the easy gentleman. Those who were in any way distinguished, excited envy in him to so ridiculous an excess, that the instances of it are hardly credible. When accompanying two beautiful young ladies with their mother on a tour in France, he was seriously angry that more attention was paid to them than to him.

Johnson : “ It is amazing how little Goldsmith knows. He seldom comes where he is not more ignorant than anyone else.”

Sir Joshua Reynolds : “ Yet there is no man whose company is more liked.”

Johnson : “ To be sure, Sir. When people find a man of the most distinguished abilities as a writer, their inferior while he is with them, it must be highly gratifying to them. What Goldsmith comically says of himself is very true—he always gets the better when he argues alone ; meaning, that he is master of a subject in his study, and can write well upon it ; but when he comes into company, grows confused, and unable to talk.”

(James Boswell)



I received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress, and as it was not in his power to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as possible. I sent him a guinea and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was drest, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea, and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me that he had a novel ready for the

press, which he produced to me [The Vicar of Wakefield.] I looked into it, and saw its merit ; told the landlady I should soon return, and having gone to a bookseller, sold it for sixty pounds. I brought Goldsmith the money, and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill.

(*Dr. Johnson*)



Having one day a call to wait on the late duke, then Earl of Northumberland, I found Goldsmith waiting for an audience in an outer room ; I asked him what had brought him there : he told me an invitation from his lordship. I made my business as short as I could, and, as a reason, mentioned, that Dr. Goldsmith was waiting without. The earl asked me if I was acquainted with him : I told him I was, adding what I thought likely to recommend him. I retired, and staid in the outer room to take him home. Upon his coming out, I asked him the result of his conversation. “ His lordship,” says he, “ told me he had read my poem,” meaning the “ Traveller,” “ and was much delighted with it ; that he was going Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and that, hearing that I was a native of that country, he should be glad to do me any kindness.” “ And what did you answer,” asked I, “ to this gracious offer ? ” “ Why,” said he, “ I could say nothing but that I had a brother there, a clergyman, that stood in need of help : as for

myself, I have no dependence on the promises of great men : I look to the booksellers for support ; they are my best friends, and I am not inclined to forsake them for others.”

Thus did this idiot, in the affairs of the world, trifle with his fortunes, and put back the hand that was held out to assist him !

(Sir John Hawkins)



He died of a fever, exasperated, as I believe, by the fear of distress. He had raised money and squandered it, by every artifice of acquisition and folly of expense. But let not his frailties be remembered : he was a very great man.

(Dr. Johnson)

DR. W. G. GRACE (1848-1915)

To many people, not very far advanced in middle age, "W. G." is still a well-remembered figure. They have seen him emerge splendidly from the pavilion at Lords—a swarthy giant, his great beard flowing in the breeze, his movements elephantine almost, yet athletic and even lithe. On his head invariably the gay cap, yellow and red of the M.C.C. ; in his hand, if his were the batting side, his bat, dwindled by comparison with his immense size to a mere baton. In his case it was impossible not to feel that the statutory measurements of the cricket bat, in regard to length and breadth, should have been enlarged. But with what invincible prowess he wielded this (as it seemed) puny implement ! Are not his achievements at the wicket celebrated for all time in the records of Wisden ? . . . Those far off sunshine days at Lords ! The large appreciative crowds round the arena, then less encumbered by concrete stands ; the reek of cigar and orange peel ! How vividly the memory recalls them. And not less vividly than his batting the Champion's lightning activity when fielding in the slips. He reached out huge hairy hands and not so much *caught* as enveloped, engulfed, any ball that came his way.

"W. G." was as well known in those days as the Prime Minister, and in much higher favour. I remember how enviously and jealously a school comrade was regarded who had been happy

enough to see the Champion in tall hat and frock coat (his mufti) going to a wedding or other social engagement. To have rested for a moment under the observation of his eye, much more to have been spoken to by him, would have been something to brag about for whole terms. We were astonished at the easy relations subsisting between him and other players in the field.

My last recollection of him belongs to an exact date, the 18th July, 1906. I had repaired to the Oval for an hour or two's cricket, in company with Edwin Montagu, afterwards Secretary for India. The match was Gentlemen *v.* Players. It was "W. G.'s" fifty-eighth birthday and we saw him make seventy-four runs.

(C. H.)

HENRY GRATTAN (1746-1820)

Grattan here [at Brighton], with whom I have frequent long walks. It is impossible to meet with anyone more amiable and unaffected ; and considering his successful and brilliant public life, his absence of all vanity is quite miraculous

(*Thomas Creevey, 1809*)



I have never heard any one who fulfilled my ideal of an orator. Grattan would have been near it, but for his harlequin delivery.

(*Lord Byron*)



His air had something foreign in it ; from the vivacity that accompanied his politeness I should have taken him for a well-bred man of fashion of France.

(*Fanny Burney*)



In the evening had some conversation with Mr. Grattan. His manner is singular, with much action, and his pronunciation, without being Irish, so very foreign that nobody at first could possibly take him for a native of these islands. . . .

(*Miss Berry*)



When I pointed out to him in the newspaper one of Mr. Grattan's animated and glowing

speeches, in favour of the freedom of Ireland, in which this expression occurred (I know not if accurately taken) : “ We will persevere, till there is not one link of the English chain left to clank upon the rags of the meanest beggar in Ireland ” ; —“ Nay, Sir (said Johnson), don’t you perceive that *one* link cannot clank ? ”

(*James Boswell*)



. . . His eloquence was of a very high order, all but of the very highest, and it was eminently original. . . . If he had some peculiarity of outward appearance, as a low and awkward person, in which he resembled the first of orators, and even of manner, in which he had not, like him, made the defects of nature yield to severe culture : so had he one excellence of the very highest order, in which he may be truly said to have left all the orators of modern times behind—the severe abstinence which rests satisfied with striking the decisive blow in a word or two, not weakening its effect by repetition and expansion — and another excellence higher still, in which no orator of any age is his equal, the easy and copious flow of most profound, sagacious, and original principles, enunciated in terse and striking, but appropriate language. To give a sample of this latter peculiarity would be less easy, and would occupy more space ; but of the former it may be truly said that Dante himself never conjured up a striking, a pathetic, and

an appropriate image in fewer words than Mr. Grattan employed to describe his relation towards Irish independence, when, alluding to its rise in 1782, and its fall twenty years later, he said, "I sat by its cradle—I followed its hearse."

(Lord Brougham)



Great men hallow a whole people, and lift up all who live in their time. What Irishman does not feel proud that he has lived in the days of Grattan? Who has not turned to him for comfort, from the false friends and open enemies of Ireland? Who did not remember him in the days of its burnings, wastings, and murders? No Government ever dismayed him—the world could not bribe him—he thought only of Ireland: lived for no other object, dedicated to her his beautiful fancy, his elegant wit, his manly courage, and all the splendours of his astonishing eloquence.

(Sydney Smith)

THOMAS GRAY (1716-1771)

He is the worst company in the world. From a melancholy turn, from living reclusely, and from a little too much dignity, he never converses easily : all his words are measured and chosen, and formed into sentences ; his writings are admirable ; he himself is not agreeable.

(*Horace Walpole*)



Perhaps he was the most learned man in Europe. He was equally acquainted with the elegant and profound parts of science, and that not superficially but thoroughly. He knew every branch of history, both natural and civil ; had read all the original historians of England, France and Italy ; and was a great antiquarian. Criticism, metaphysics, morals, politics, made a principal part of his plan of study ; voyages and travels of all sorts were his favourite amusement ; and he had a fine taste in painting, prints, architecture, and gardening. With such a fund of knowledge, his conversation must have been equally instructing and entertaining ; but he was also a good man, a well-bred man, a man of virtue and humanity. There is no character without some speck, some imperfection ; and I think the greatest defect in his was an affectation

in delicacy, or rather effeminacy, and a visible fastidiousness, or contempt and disdain of his inferiors in science. He also had in some degree that weakness which disgusted Voltaire so much in Mr. Congreve : though he seemed to value others, chiefly according to the progress they had made in knowledge ; yet he could not bear to be considered himself merely as a man of letters ; and though without birth, or fortune, or station, his desire was to be looked upon as a private independent Gentleman, who read for his amusement.

(Anon)



It is long since that I heard you were gone in haste into Yorkshire on account of your mother's illness, and the same letter informed me that she was recovered, otherwise I had then wrote to you only to beg you would take care of her, and to inform you that I had discovered a thing very little known, which is, that in one's whole life one can never have any more than a single mother. You may think this obvious, and (what you call) a trite observation. You are a green gosling ! I was at the same age (very near) as wise as you, and yet I never discovered this (with full evidence and conviction I mean) till it was too late. It is thirteen years ago, and seems but as yesterday, and every day I live it sinks deeper into my heart.

(Thomas Gray to Mr. Nicholls)

He seldom mentioned his Mother without a sigh. After his death her gowns and wearing apparel were found in a trunk in his apartments just as she had left them ; it seemed as if he could never take the resolution to open it, in order to distribute them to his female relations, to whom, by his will, he bequeathed them.

(W. Mason)

THE BEAUTIFUL GUNNING SISTERS

Maria (1733-1760)

Elizabeth (1734-1790)

Maria and Elizabeth Gunning ("those goddesses the Gunnings," as Mrs. Montagu styles them in one of her letters,) were the daughters of John Gunning, Esq., of Castle Coote in Ireland, by Bridget, daughter of Theobald Bourke, sixth Viscount Mayo. Maria, the eldest sister, appears to have been born in 1733; the younger sister in 1734; consequently, at their first appearance at court, in 1751, the one must have been in her nineteenth, the other in her eighteenth year.

The surpassing loveliness of the Gunnings has almost become matter of history; nor perhaps is there any instance of mere beauty having excited so extraordinary a sensation as that produced by the appearance in the fashionable circles of London of these two portionless Irish girls. Horace Walpole writes to Sir Horace Mann, on the 18th of June, 1751, "You, who knew England in other times, will find it difficult to conceive what indifference reigns with regard to ministers and their squabbles. . . . These are two Irish girls, of no fortune, who are declared the handsomest women alive. I think their being two so handsome; and both such perfect figures, is their chief excellence, for, singly, I have seen much handsomer women than either; however they can't walk in the Park, or go to Vauxhall,

but such crowds follow them, that they are generally driven away."

Walpole writes to the same correspondent on the 31st of August following,—“As you talk of our beauties, I shall tell you a new story of the Gunnings, who make more noise than any of their predecessors since the days of Helen, though neither of them, nor anything about them, has yet been *teterrima belli causa*. They went the other day to see Hampton Court; as they were going into the Beauty-room, another company arrived; the housekeeper said, ‘This way, ladies, here are the beauties.’ The Gunnings flew into a passion, and asked her what she meant; they came to see the palace, not to be shown as a sight themselves.”

The first of the fair sisters whose beauty obtained her a husband was the youngest, Elizabeth, who, on the 14th of February, 1752, became the wife of James Duke of Hamilton. Horace Walpole . . . thus announces the circumstance to Sir Horace Mann: “The event that has made most noise since my last, is the extempore wedding of the youngest of the two Gunnings, who have made so vehement a noise. Lord Coventry, a grave young lord, of the remains of the patriot breed, has long dangled after the eldest, virtuously, with regard to her honour, not very honourably with regard to his own credit. About six weeks ago, Duke Hamilton, the very reverse of the Earl, hot, debauched, extravagant, and equally damaged in his fortune and person,



ELIZABETH GUNNING,
From an engraving

fell in love with the youngest at the masquerade, and determined to marry her in the spring. About a fortnight since, at an immense assembly at my Lord Chesterfield's, made to show the house, which is really most magnificent, Duke Hamilton made violent love at one end of the room, while he was playing at pharaoh at the other end ; that is, he saw neither the bank nor his own cards, which were of three hundred pounds each : he soon lost a thousand. I own I was so little a professor in love, that I thought all this parade looked ill for the poor girl : and could not conceive, if he was so much engaged with his mistress as to disregard such sums, why he played at all. However, two nights afterwards, being left alone with her, while her mother and sister were at Bedford House, he found himself so impatient, that he sent for a parson. The doctor refused to perform the ceremony without license or ring : the Duke swore he would send for the Archbishop : at last they were married with a ring of the bed-curtain, at half-an-hour after twelve at night, at Mayfair Chapel. The Scotch are enraged ; the women mad that so much beauty has had its effect ; and, what is more silly, my Lord Coventry declares that now he will marry the other." In less than three weeks Maria Gunning followed her sister to the altar. Her choice, it is needless to add, fell on Lord Coventry, to whom she was married on the 5th of March, 1752.

. . . Universal as had been the interest and

curiosity excited by the exceeding beauty of the fair sisters, the feeling was considerably increased by the splendid alliances which they so suddenly formed. "The world," writes Walpole, "is still mad about the Gunnings: the Duchess of Hamilton was presented on Friday; the crowd was so great that even the noble crowd in the drawing-room clambered upon chairs and tables to look at her. There are mobs at their doors to see them get into their chairs; and people go early to get places at the theatres when it is known they will be there." Again, adds Walpole, a few weeks afterwards, "The Gunnings are gone to their several castles, and one hears no more of them, except that such crowds flock to see the Duchess of Hamilton pass, that seven hundred people sat up all night, in and about an inn in Yorkshire, to see her get into her post-chaise next morning."

"... It is literally true, that a shoemaker at Worcester got two guineas and a half by showing a shoe that he was making for the Countess, at a penny a-head. I can't say her genius is equal to her beauty: she every day says some new *sproposito*. She has taken a turn of vast fondness for her lord: Lord Downe met them at Calais, and offered her a tent-bed, for fear of bugs in the inns. 'Oh!' said she, 'I had rather be bit to death than lie one night from my dear Cov.!' "

... That Lady Coventry was naturally a weak-minded person—or rather that she wanted that tact and discernment, of which probably a

longer communion with the world would have made her the mistress—there is every reason to believe. George the Second, at the close of his long life, was conversing with her on the dulness of the town, and regretting, for her sake, that there had been no masquerades during the year : “ As for sights,” said the inconsiderate beauty, “ she was quite satisfied with them ; there was only one which she was eager to see, and that was a Coronation ! ” The train of reflection which this speech must have occasioned, could scarcely have been pleasing to an old man : George the Second, however, is said to have been highly diverted with the awkward blunder, and, at supper, repeated it with great good-humour to his family.

. . . If happiness consists in titles, and an extended existence, the Duchess of Hamilton was more favoured than her elder sister. Her married life, however, was perhaps not a happy one. “ Her history,” writes Walpole, “ is not unentertaining : Duke Hamilton is the abstract of Scotch pride ; he and the duchess, at their own house, walk in to dinner before their company ; sit together at the upper end of their own table ; eat off the same plate ; and drink to nobody beneath the rank of earl. Would not one wonder how they could get anybody, either above or below that rank, to dine with them at all ? I don’t know whether you will not think all these very trifling histories ; but, for myself, I love anything that marks a character strongly.”

On the 17th of January, 1758, the Duchess was deprived of her husband by death, and on the 3rd of March, the following year, became the wife of Colonel John Campbell, afterwards Duke of Argyll, thus uniting the two great houses of Hamilton and Campbell.

(J. H. Jesse)

NELL GWYN (1650-1687)

Nell, in her boy's clothes, mighty pretty.



My wife and I to the King's playhouse . . . we sat in an upper box, and the jade Nell came and sat in the next box ; a bold merry slut, who lay laughing there upon people.



. . . Nelly, a most pretty woman, who acted the great part of Cœlia to-day very fine, and did it pretty well : I kissed her, and so did my wife ; and a mighty pretty soul she is.

(Samuel Pepys)



Gwyn, the indiscreetest and wildest creature that ever was in a court, continued to the end of the King's life in great favour, and was maintained at a vast expense. The Duke of Buckingham told me, that when she was first brought to the King, she asked only five hundred pounds a year : and the King refused it. But when he told me this, about four years after, he said, she had got of the King above sixty thousand pounds. She acted all persons in so lively a manner, and was such a constant diversion to the King, that even a new mistress could not drive her away.

(Bishop Burnet)



Let not poor Nelly starve.

(King Charles II)

EMMA, LADY HAMILTON (? 1761-1815)

Our dear Lady Hamilton, whom to see is to admire, but, to know, are to be added honour and respect ; her head and heart surpass her beauty, which cannot be equalled by anything I have seen.

(Lord Nelson)



. . . She was full in person, not fat, but *embon-point*. Not at all delicate, ill-bred, often very affected, a devil in temper when set on edge. She had beautiful hair and displayed it. Her countenance was agreeable—fine, hardly beautiful, but the outline excellent . . . Nelson was infatuated. She could make him believe anything.

(William Beckford)



I went to Lord Nelson's on Saturday to dinner, and returned to-day in the forenoon. The whole establishment and way of life is such as to make me angry, as well as melancholy ; but I cannot alter it, and I do not think myself obliged or at liberty to quarrel with him for his weakness, though nothing shall ever induce me to give the smallest countenance to Lady Hamilton. She looks ultimately to the chance of marriage, as Sir W. [Hamilton] will not be long in her way, and she probably indulges a hope that she may survive Lady Nelson ; in the meanwhile

she and Sir William and the whole set of them are living with him at his expense. She is in high looks and more immense than ever. She goes on cramming Nelson with trowelfuls of flattery, which he goes on taking as quietly as a child does pap. The love she makes to him is not only ridiculous, but disgusting : not only the rooms, but the whole house, [Merton Abbey], staircase and all, are covered with nothing but pictures of her and him, of all sizes and sorts, and representations of his naval actions, coats of arms, pieces of plate in his honour, the flagstaff of “ L’Orient ” etc.,—an excess of vanity which counteracts its own purpose. If it was Lady H.’s house there might be a pretence for it ; to make his own a mere looking-glass to view himself all day is bad taste.

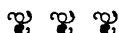


She is all Nature and yet all Art ; that is to say, her manners are perfectly unpolished, of course very easy, though not with the ease of good breeding, but of a barmaid ; excessively good humoured, and wishing to please and be admired by all ages and sorts of persons that come in her way ; but besides considerable natural understanding, she has acquired, since her marriage, some knowledge of history and of the arts, and one wonders at the application and pains she has taken to make herself what she is.

(1st Earl of Minto)

The talents which nature bestowed on the fair Emma, led her to delight in the two kindred arts of Music, and Painting. In the first she acquired great practical ability ; for the second she had exquisite taste, and such expressive powers, as could furnish to an historical painter, an inspiring model for the various characters, either delicate, or sublime, that he might have occasion to represent. Her features, like the language of Shakespeare, could exhibit all the feelings of nature, and all the gradations of every passion, with a most fascinating truth, and felicity of expression. Romney delighted in observing the wonderful command she possessed over her eloquent features, and thro' the surprising vicissitudes of her destiny she ever took a generous pride in serving him as a model.

(William Hayley, in his Life of Romney, 1809)



At present, and the greatest part of the summer I shall be engaged in painting pictures of the divine lady. I cannot give her any other epithet, for I think her superior to all woman-kind . . . I dedicate myself to this charming lady.

(George Romney, 1791)



WARREN HASTINGS

From an engraving after George Stubbs

WARREN HASTINGS (1732-1818)

In his person he was thin but not tall, of a spare habit, very bald, with a countenance placid and thoughtful, but when animated full of intelligence. Never perhaps did a man who passed the Cape of Good Hope display a mind more elevated above mercenary considerations. Placed in a station where he might have amassed immense wealth, without exciting censure, he revisited England with only a modest competence. Animated by the ambition of maintaining, perhaps of extending, the dominions of the East India Company, he looked down on pecuniary concerns.

(*Sir N. W. Wraxall*)



His sweet temper and readiness at all times to oblige, rendered him a universal favourite [at Westminster School].

(*The Rev. G. R. Gleig*)



A man . . . who, by those who are fortunate enough to know him in private life, is admired for his literature and taste, and beloved for the candour, moderation, and mildness of his character.

(*James Boswell*)



He was a great water-drinker, and so fastidious in the quality of the beverage, that he

would send for it when in London from a considerable distance to the spring which rises near the barracks that adjoin Kensington Gardens.

(The Rev. G. R. Gleig)



Among other persons who came to pay their respects to the Prince [afterwards George IV] during the Autumn of 1805 was Mr. Hastings, whom I had never seen before excepting at his trial in Westminster Hall. He and Mrs. Hastings came to the Pavilion, [at Brighton] and I was present when the Prince introduced Sheridan to him, which was curious, considering that Sheridan's parliamentary fame had been built upon his celebrated speech against Hastings. However, he lost no time in attempting to cajole old Hastings, begging him to believe that any part he had ever taken against him was purely political, and that no one had a greater respect for him than himself, &c., &c., upon which old Hastings said with great gravity that "it would be a great consolation to him in his declining days if Mr. Sheridan would make that sentence more publick;" but Sheridan was obliged to mutter and get out of such an engagement as well as he could.

(Thomas Creevey)

GEORGE HERBERT (1593-1632)

He was for his person of a stature inclining towards tallness ; his body was very straight, and so far from being cumbered with too much flesh, that he was lean to an extremity. His aspect was cheerful, and his speech and motion did both declare him a gentleman ; for they were all so meek and obliging, that they purchased love and respect from all that knew him.



Sir Francis Bacon (Lord Verulam) . . . put such a value on his judgment that he usually desired his approbation, before he would expose any of his books to be printed.



His chiefest recreation was music, in which heavenly art he was a most excellent master, and did himself compose many divine hymns and anthems, which he set and sung to his lute or viol ; and, though he was a lover of retiredness, yet his love to music was such, that he went usually twice every week on certain appointed days to the Cathedral Church in Salisbury ; and on his return would say, *That his time spent in prayer and Cathedral music, elevated his soul, and was his heaven upon earth* : But before his return thence to Bemerton, he would usually sing and

play his part, at an appointed private music-meeting ; and, to justify this practice, he would often say *Religion does not banish mirth but only moderates and sets rules.*



Some of the meaner sort of his Parish did so love and reverence Mr. Herbert, that they would let their plow rest when Mr. Herbert's Saints-Bell rung to prayers, that they might also offer their devotions to God : and would then return back to their plow. And his most holy life was such, that it begot such reverence to God, and to him, that they thought themselves the happier when they carried Mr. Herbert's blessing back with them to their labour.

(Izaak Walton)

JUDGE JEFFREYS (1648-1689)

He had hanged more traitors than all the judges of England since William the Conqueror.

(Jeffreys, on himself)



Jeffreys was sent the western circuit to try the prisoners [after the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion]. His behaviour was beyond anything that was ever heard of in a civilized nation. He was perpetually either drunk or in a rage, liker a fury than the zeal of a judge. He required the prisoners to plead guilty. And in that case he gave them some hope of favour, if they gave him no trouble : otherwise, he told them, he would execute the letter of the law upon them in its utmost severity. This made many plead guilty, who had a great defence in law. But he showed no mercy. He ordered a great many to be hanged up immediately, without allowing them a minute's time to say their prayers. He hanged, in several places, six hundred persons. The greatest part of these were of the meanest sort, and of no distinction. The impieties with which he treated them, and his behaviour towards some of the nobility and gentry that were well affected, but came and pleaded in favour of some prisoners, would have amazed one, if done by a bashaw in Turkey. England had never known anything like it. The instances are too many to be reckoned up. But that which brought all his

excesses to be imputed to the King himself [James II], and to the orders given by him was, that the King had a particular account of all his proceedings writ to him every day. And he took pleasure to relate them in the drawing room to foreign ministers, and at his table, calling it Jeffrey's campaign : speaking of all he had done in a style that neither became the majesty nor the mercifulness of a great prince.

(Bishop Burnet)



“ His Majesty [James II], taking into his royal consideration the many eminent and faithful services which the Right Honourable George, Lord Jeffreys, of Wem, lord chief justice of England, had rendered the crown, as well in the reign of the late King, of ever blessed memory, as since His Majesty's accession to the throne, was pleased this day to commit to him the custody of the great seal of England, with the title of Lord Chancellor.”

(London Gazette, Oct. 1st, 1685)



THE HUMBLE PETITION OF THE WIDOWS AND
FATHERLESS CHILDREN IN THE WEST OF ENGLAND :

We, to the number of a thousand and more, widows and fatherless children, of the counties of Dorset, Somerset and Devon ; our dear husbands and tender fathers having been so



JUDGE JEFFREYS
From an engraving

tyrannously butcher'd and some transported ; our estates sold from us, and our inheritance cut off by the severe and harsh sentence of George, Lord Jeffreys, now, we understand, in the Tower of London, a prisoner ; who has lately, we hear, endeavoured to excuse himself from these tyrannical and illegal sentences, by laying it on information by some gentlemen, who are known to us to be good Christians, true Protestants, and Englishmen. We, your poor petitioners, many hundreds of us, on our knees have begg'd mercy for our dear husbands and tender parents from his cruel hands, but his thirst for blood was so great, and his barbarism so cruel, that instead of granting mercy for some, which were made to appear innocent, and petitioned for by the flower of the gentry of the said counties, he immediately executed. . . . These, with many more tyrannical acts, are ready to be made appear in the said counties, by honest and credible persons ; and therefore your petitioners desire, that the said George Jeffreys, late lord chancellor, the vilest of men, may be brought down to the counties aforesaid, where we, the good women in the west, shall be glad to see him, and give him another manner of welcome than he had these three years since. And your petitioners shall ever pray etc.

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON (1709-1784)

In a man whom religious education has secured from licentious indulgences, the passion of love, when once it has seized him, is exceedingly strong ; being unimpaired by dissipation, and totally concentrated in one object. This was experienced by Johnson, when he became the fervent admirer of Mrs. Porter after her first husband's death. Miss Porter told me, that when he was first introduced to her mother, his appearance was very forbidding : he was then lean and lank, so that his immense structure of bones was hideously striking to the eye, and the scars of the scrofula were deeply visible. He also wore his hair, which was straight and stiff, and separated behind : and he often had, seemingly, convulsive starts and odd gesticulations, which tended to excite at once surprise and ridicule. Mrs. Porter was so much engaged by his conversation that she overlooked all these external disadvantages, and said to her daughter, " This is the most sensible man that I ever saw in my life."

(James Boswell)



. . . He loved the poor as I never yet saw any one else do, with an earnest desire to make them happy. " What signifies," says someone, " giving halfpence to common beggars ? They only lay it out in gin or tobacco." " And why should they be denied such sweeteners of their

existence ? ” says Johnson. “ It is surely very savage to refuse them every possible avenue to pleasure, reckoned too coarse for our own acceptance. Life is a pill which none of us can bear to swallow without gilding ; yet for the poor we delight in stripping it still barer, and are not ashamed to show even visible displeasure, if ever the bitter taste is taken from their mouths.” In consequence of these principles he nursed whole nests of people in his house, where the lame, the blind, the sick, and the sorrowful found a sure retreat from all the evils whence his little income could secure them : and commonly spending the middle of the week at our house, he kept his numerous family in Fleet-street upon a settled allowance ; but returned to them every Saturday to give them three good dinners, and his company, before he came back to us on the Monday night—treating them with the same, or perhaps more ceremonious civility, than he would have done by as many people of fashion—making the holy scriptures thus the rule of his conduct, and only expecting salvation as he was able to obey its precepts.

(Hesther Lynch Piozzi (Thrale))



There is a man whose moral character, deep learning, and superior parts, I acknowledge, admire, and respect ; but whom it is so impossible for me to love, that I am almost in a fever whenever I am in his company. His figure

(without being deformed) seems made to disgrace or ridicule the common structure of the human body. His legs and arms are never in the position which, according to the situation of his body, they ought to be in, but constantly employed in committing acts of hostility upon the graces. He throws any where, but down his throat, whatever he means to drink, and only mangles what he means to carve. Inattentive to all the regards of social life, he mis-times and mis-places every thing. He disputes with heat, and indiscriminately, mindless of the rank, character, and situation of them with whom he disputes : absolutely ignorant of the several gradations of familiarity and respect, he is exactly the same to his superiors, his equals, and his inferiors ; and therefore, by a necessary consequence, absurd to two of the three. Is it possible to love such a man ? No. The utmost I can do for him, is, to consider him as a respectable Hottentot.

(Earl of Chesterfield)



I have seen the Duchess of Devonshire, then in the first bloom of youth, hanging on the sentences that fell from Johnson's lips, and contending for the nearest place to his chair.

(Sir N. W. Wraxall)



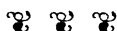
Johnson's blind Toryism and known brutality kept me aloof ; nor did I ever exchange a syllable with him : nay, I do not think I was in a room

with him six times in my days. The first time, I think, was at the Royal Academy. Sir Joshua said, "Let me present Dr. Goldsmith to you." He did. "Now I will present Dr. Johnson to you." "No," said I, "Sir Joshua; for Dr. Goldsmith, pass—but you shall *not* present Dr. Johnson."

(*Horace Walpole*)



I passed many hours with him on the 17th [of May, 1775] of which I find all my memorial is, "much laughing." It should seem he had that day been in a humour for jocularitv and merriment, and upon such occasions I never knew a man laugh more heartily . . . Johnson's laugh was as remarkable as any circumstance in his manner. It was a kind of good-humoured growl. Tom Davies described it drolly enough : "He laughs like a rhinoceros."



Garrick remarked to me of him, "Rabelais and all other wits are nothing compared with him. You may be diverted by them; but Johnson gives you a forcible hug, and shakes laughter out of you, whether you will or no."



. . . Dr. Johnson did me the honour to pass a part of the morning with me at my chambers. He said that "he always felt an inclination to do

nothing." I observed, that it was strange to think that the most indolent man in Britain had written the most laborious work, The English Dictionary.



At supper this night he talked of good eating with uncommon satisfaction. "Some people" (said he), "have a foolish way of not minding, or pretending not to mind, what they eat. For my part, I mind my belly very studiously, and very carefully; for I look upon it, that he who does not mind his belly will hardly mind any thing else."

(James Boswell)



Dr. Johnson was always exceeding fond of chemistry; and we made up a sort of laboratory at Streatham one summer, and diverted ourselves with drawing essences and colouring liquors. But the danger Mr. Thrale found his friend in one day when I was driven to London, and he had got the children and servants round him to see some experiments performed, put an end to all our entertainment; so well was the master of the house persuaded, that his short sight would have been his destruction in a moment, by bringing him close to a fierce and violent flame. Indeed it was a perpetual miracle that he did not set himself on fire reading a bed, as was his constant custom, when exceedingly unable even to keep clear of mischief without our best help; and

accordingly the fore-top of all his wigs were burned by the candle down to the very net-work. Mr. Thrale's valet-de-chambre, for that reason, kept one always in his own hands, with which he met him at the parlour-door when the bell had called him down to dinner, and as he went upstairs to sleep in the afternoon, the same man constantly followed him with another.

Future experiments in chemistry however were too dangerous, and Mr. Thrale insisted that we should do no more towards finding the philosophers stone.

(Hesther Lynch Piozzi (Thrale))



. . . My wife paid him the most assiduous and respectful attention, while he was our guest ; so that I wonder how he discovered her wishing for his departure. The truth is, that his irregular hours and uncouth habits, such as turning the candles with their heads downwards, when they did not burn bright enough, and letting the wax drop upon the carpet, could not but be disagreeable to a lady. Besides, she had not that high admiration of him which was felt by most of those who knew him ; and what was very natural to a female mind, she thought he had too much influence over her husband. She once in a little warmth, made, with more point than justice, this remark upon that subject : “ I have seen many a bear led by a man ; but I never before saw a man led by a bear.”

(James Boswell)

. . . By the end of the year 1754, he had completed [the Dictionary], not more to his own ease and satisfaction, than to the joy of Millar the bookseller, the principal proprietor of the work, and the guardian or treasurer of the fund out of which the payments were from time to time issued. To say the truth, his joy on the occasion was so great, that he could not refrain from expressing it somewhat intemperately, as appears by the following acknowledgment of the receipt of the last sheet of the manuscript :

“ Andrew Millar sends his compliments to Mr. Samuel Johnson, with the money for the last sheet of copy of the Dictionary, and thanks God he has done with him.”

To which Johnson returned this good-humoured and brief answer :

“ Samuel Johnson returns his compliments to Mr. Andrew Millar, and is very glad to find, as he does by his note, that Andrew Millar has the grace to thank God for any thing.”

(Sir John Hawkins)



He certainly rode on Mr. Thrale's old hunter with a good firmness, and though he would follow the hounds fifty miles on end sometimes, would never own himself either tired or amused. “ I have now learned (said he), by hunting, to perceive, that it is no diversion at all, nor ever takes a man out of himself for a moment : the dogs have less sagacity than I could have pre-

vailed on myself to suppose ; and the gentlemen often call to me not to ride over them. It is very strange, and very melancholy, that the paucity of human pleasures should persuade us ever to call hunting one of them." He was however proud to be amongst the sportsmen ; and I think no praise ever went so close to his heart, as when Mr. Hamilton called out one day upon Brighthelmstone [Brighton] Downs, "Why Johnson rides as well, for aught I see, as the most illiterate fellow in England."

(Hesther Lynch Piozzi (Thrale))



On the 9th of April, being Good Friday, I breakfasted with him on tea and cross-buns. . . . He carried me with him to the church of St. Clement Danes, where he had his seat ; and his behaviour was, as I had imaged to myself, solemnly devout. I never shall forget the tremulous earnestness with which he pronounced the awful petition in the Litany : " In the hour of death, and at the day of judgment, good Lord deliver us."

We went to church both in the morning and evening. In the interval between the two services we did not dine ; but he read in the Greek New Testament, and I turned over several of his books.

. . . To my great surprise he asked me to dine with him on Easter-day. I never supposed that he had a dinner at his house ; for I had not then heard of any one of his friends having been

entertained at his table. He told me, "I generally have a meat pie on Sunday : it is baked at a public oven, which is very properly allowed, because one man can attend it; and thus the advantage is obtained of not keeping servants from church to dress dinners."

(James Boswell)



5th Dec. 1784. Being Sunday, I communicated with him and Mr. Langton, and other of his friends, as many as nearly filled the room. Mr. Strahan, who was constant in his attendance on him throughout this illness, performed the office. Previous to reading the exhortation, Johnson knelt, and with a degree of fervour that I had never been witness to before, uttered the following most eloquent and energetic prayer :

" Almighty and most merciful Father, I am now, as to human eyes it seems, about to commemorate, for the last time, the death of thy son Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer. Grant, O Lord, that my whole hope and confidence may be in his merits and in thy mercy ; forgive and accept my late conversion ; enforce and accept my imperfect repentance ; make this commemoration of him available to the confirmation of my faith, the establishment of my hope, and the enlargement of my charity ; and make the death of thy son Jesus effectual to my redemption. Have mercy upon me, and pardon the multitude of my

offences. Bless my friends, have mercy upon all men. Support me by the grace of thy holy spirit in the days of weakness, and at the hour of death, and receive me, at my death, to everlasting happiness, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen."

(Sir John Hawkins)

[Dr. Johnson died on the 13th day of the same month.]

JOHN KEATS (1796-1821)

He was below the middle size, with a low forehead, and an eye that had an inward look, perfectly divine, like a Delphian priestess who saw visions. . . .

(*B. R. Haydon*)



Keats, when he died, had just completed his four-and-twentieth year. He was under the middle height ; and his lower limbs were small in comparison with the upper, but neat and well turned. His shoulders were very broad for his size : he had a face in which energy and sensibility were remarkably mixed up ; and eager power, checked and made patient by ill-health. Every feature was at once strongly cut, and delicately alive. If there was any faulty expression, it was in the mouth, which was not without something of a character of pugnacity. His face was rather long than otherwise ; the upper lip projected a little over the under ; the chin was bold, the cheeks sunken ; the eyes mellow and glowing ; large, dark, and sensitive. At the recital of a noble action, or a beautiful thought, they would suffuse with tears, and his mouth trembled. In this, there was ill-health as well as imagination, for he did not like these betrayals of emotion ; and he had great personal as well as moral courage. He once chastised a butcher, who had been insolent, by a regular stand-up

fight. His hair, of a brown colour, was fine, and hung in natural ringlets. The head was a puzzle for the phrenologist, being remarkably small in the skull ; a singularity which he had in common with Byron and Shelley, whose hats I could not get on. Keats was sensible of the disproportion above noticed, between his upper and lower extremities ; and he would look at his hand which was faded, and swollen in the veins, and say it was the hand of a man of fifty. He was a seven months' child. His mother, who was a lively woman, passionately fond of amusement, is supposed to have hastened her death by too great an inattention to hours and seasons. Perhaps she hastened that of her son.

(Leigh Hunt)



Please send me *no more* poetry but what is rare and decidedly good. There is such a trash of Keats and the like upon my tables that I am ashamed to look at them. . . . No more Keats, I entreat :—flay him alive ; if some of you don't, I must skin him myself. There is no bearing the drivelling idiotism of the manikin.

(Lord Byron to John Murray, 1820)



I have received the heart-rending account of the closing scene of the great genius [Keats] whom envy and ingratitude scourged out of the

world. I do not think that if I had seen it before, I could have composed my poem ["Adonais"]. The enthusiasm of the imagination would have overpowered the sentiment.

As it is, I have finished my Elegy ; and this day I sent it to the press at Pisa. You shall have a copy the moment it is printed. I think it will please you. I have dipped my pen in consuming fire for his destroyers ; otherwise the style is calm and solemn.

(Shelley to John Gisborne. From Pisa, June, 1821)

CHARLES LAMB (1775-1834)

Charles Lamb had a head worthy of Aristotle, with as fine a heart as ever beat in human bosom, and limbs very fragile to sustain it. . . . There never was a true portrait of Lamb. His features were strongly yet delicately cut ; he had a fine eye as well as forehead ; and no face carried in it greater marks of thought and feeling. It resembled that of Bacon, with less worldly vigour and more sensibility.

(Leigh Hunt)



Methinks I see him before me now, as he appeared then, and as he continued with scarcely any perceptible alteration to me, during the twenty years of intimacy which followed, and were closed by his death. A light frame, so fragile that it seemed as if a breath would overthrow it, clad in clerk-like black, was surmounted by a head of form and expression the most noble and sweet. His black hair curled crisply about an expanded forehead ; his eyes, softly brown, twinkled with varying expression, though the prevalent feeling was sad ; and the nose slightly curved, and delicately carved at the nostril, with the lower outline of the face regularly oval, completed a head which was finely placed on the shoulders, and gave importance and even dignity to a diminutive and shadowy stem. Who shall

describe his countenance, catch its quivering sweetness, and fix it for ever in words? There are none, alas, to answer the vain desire of friendship. Deep thought, striving with humour; the lines of suffering wreathed into cordial mirth; and a smile of painful sweetness, present an image to the mind it can as little describe as lose. His personal appearance and manner are not unfitly characterised by what he himself says in one of his letters to Manning of Braham, "a compound of the Jew, the gentleman, and the angel."

(Sir T. N. Talfourd)



Mr. Lamb's personal appearance was remarkable. It quite realized the expectations of those who think that an author and a wit should have a distinct air, a separate costume, a particular cloth, something positive and singular about him. Such unquestionably had Mr. Lamb. Once he rejoiced in snuff-colour, but latterly his costume was inveterately black—with gaiters which seemed longing for something more substantial to close in. His legs were remarkably slight—so indeed was his whole body, which was of short stature, surmounted by a head of amazing fineness. His face was deeply marked and full of noble lines—traces of sensibility, imagination, suffering and much thought. His wit was in his eye, luminous, quick, and restless. The smile that played about his mouth was ever cordial and good-humoured; and the most cordial and



CHARLES LAMB
From an engraving

delightful of its smiles were those with which he accompanied his affectionate talk with his sister, or his jokes against her.

(John Forster)



. . . Charles Lamb was about forty years of age when I first saw him ; and I knew him intimately for the greater part of twenty years. Small and spare in person, and with small legs, (" immaterial legs," Hood called them), he had a dark complexion, curling hair, almost black, and a grave look, lightening up occasionally, and capable of sudden merriment. His laugh was seldom excited by jokes merely ludicrous ; it was never spiteful ; and his quiet smile was sometimes inexpressibly sweet ; perhaps it had a touch of sadness in it. His mouth was well-shaped ; his lip tremulous with expression ; his brown eyes were quick, restless, and glittering : and he had a grand head, full of thought. Hazlitt calls it " a fine Titian head, full of dumb eloquence."

(B. W. Procter)



At Lamb's, we used to have lively skirmishes at their Thursday evening parties. . . . There was Lamb himself, the most delightful, the most provoking, the most witty and sensible of men. He always made the best pun and the best remark in the course of the evening. His serious conversation, like his serious writing, is his best. No one

ever stammered out such fine piquant deep eloquent things, in half a dozen sentences, as he does. His jests scald like tears, and he probes a question with a play upon words. What a keen laughing hairbrained vein of home-felt truth ! What choice venom ! How often did we cut into the haunch of letters ! How we picked out the marrow of authors ! Need I go over the names ? They were but the old everlasting set,—Milton and Shakespeare, Pope and Dryden, Steele and Addison, Swift and Gay, Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, Richardson, Hogarth's prints, Claude's landscapes, the cartoons at Hampton Court, and all those things that, having once been, must ever be. The Scotch Novels had not then been heard of : so we said nothing about them. . . . With what a gusto would he describe his favourite authors, Donne or Sir Philip Sidney, and call their most crabbed passages *delicious*. He tried them on his palate, as epicures taste olives, and his observations had a smack in them, like a roughness on the tongue.

(William Hazlitt)



Lamb stuttered his quaintness in snatches, like the fool in Lear, and with equal beauty.

(B. R. Haydon)



Many liberal people I have known in this world—many who were charitable in the widest sense—many munificent people ; but never any

one upon whom, for bounty, for indulgence and forgiveness, for charitable construction of doubtful or mixed actions, and for regal munificence, you might have thrown yourself with so absolute a reliance as upon this comparatively poor Charles Lamb. . . . Well and truly, therefore, did the poet [Wordsworth] say, in his beautiful lines upon this man's grave and memory :

“ Oh, he was good, if e'er a good man lived !

(Thomas De Quincey)

MARY LAMB (? 1765-1847)

Here Charles Lamb sate, when at home, always near the table. At the opposite side was his sister, engaged in some domestic work, knitting or sewing, or poring over a modern novel. "Bridget in some things is behind her years." In fact, although she was ten years older than her brother, she had more sympathy with modern books and with youthful fancies than he had. She wore a neat cap, of the fashion of her youth ; an old-fashioned dress. Her face was pale and somewhat square ; but very placid ; with gray intelligent eyes. She was very mild in her manner to strangers ; and to her brother gentle and tender, always. She had often an upward look of peculiar meaning, when directed towards him ; as though to give him assurance that all was then well with her. His affection for her was somewhat less on the surface ; but always present. There was great gratitude intermingled with it. "In the days of weakling infancy," he writes, "I was her tender charge, as I have been her care in foolish manhood since." Then he adds, pathetically, "I wish I could throw into a heap the remainder of our joint existences, that we might share them in equal division."

(*B. W. Procter*)



Miss Lamb would have been remarkable for the sweetness of her disposition, the clearness of

her understanding, and the gentle wisdom of all her acts and words, even if these qualities had not been presented in marvellous contrast with the distraction under which she suffered for weeks, latterly for months, in every year. There was no tinge of insanity discernible in her manner to the most observant eye, not even in those distressful periods when the premonitory symptoms had apprised her of its approach, and she was making preparations for seclusion. . . . To a friend in any difficulty she was the most comfortable of advisers, the wisest of consolers. Hazlitt used to say, that he never met with a woman who could reason, and had met with only one thoroughly reasonable—the sole exception being Mary Lamb.

(Sir T. N. Talfourd)



. . . She is older, wiser, and better than I am ; and all my wretched imperfections I cover to myself, by resolutely thinking on her goodness. She would share life and death with me.

(Charles Lamb)



The constant impendency of this giant sorrow saddened to the Lambs even their holidays, as the journey which they both regarded as the relief and charm of the year was frequently followed by a seizure ; and when they ventured to take it, a strait-waistcoat, carefully packed by

Miss Lamb herself, was their constant companion. Sad experience at last induced the abandonment of the annual excursion, and Lamb was contented with walks in and near London, during the interval of labour. Miss Lamb experienced, and full well understood, premonitory symptoms of the attack in restlessness, low fever and the inability to sleep, and as gently as possible prepared her brother for the duty he must soon perform ; and thus, unless he could stave off the terrible separation till Sunday, obliged him to ask leave of absence from the office as if for a day's pleasure—a bitter mockery ! On one occasion Mr. Charles Lloyd met them, slowly pacing together a little footpath in Hoxton fields, both weeping bitterly, and found on joining them, that they were taking their solemn way to the accustomed Asylum !

(Sir T. N. Talfourd)

THOMAS BABINGTON

Lord Macaulay (1800–1859)

. . . Give my particular love to Tom [afterwards Lord Macaulay]. I am glad to perceive that his classicality has not extinguished his piety. . . . I really congratulate you on possessing such a charming Boy. I have scarcely ever met with so fine a capacity, joined to such a lively yet tractable temper. . . . He is a jewel of a boy.

(Hannah More)



He had a massive head, and features of a powerful and rugged cast, but so constantly lit up by every joyful and ennobling emotion that it mattered little if, when absolutely quiescent, his face was rather homely than otherwise. When conversing at table no one thought him otherwise than good looking ; but, when he rose, he was seen to be short and stout in figure. . . .

He at all times sat and stood straight, full, and square ; and in this respect Woolner, in the fine statue at Cambridge, has missed what was undoubtedly the most marked fact in his personal appearance. He dressed badly, but not cheaply. His clothes, though ill put on, were good, and his wardrobe was always enormously overstocked. Later in life he indulged himself in an apparently

inexhaustible succession of handsome embroidered waistcoats, which he used to regard with much complacency. He was unhandy to a degree quite unexampled in the experience of all who knew him. When in the open air he wore perfectly new dark kid gloves, into the fingers of which he never succeeded in inserting his own more than half way.

(*Sir G. O. Trevelyan*)



His general appearance is singularly commonplace. I cannot describe him better than by saying that he has exactly that kind of face and figure which by no possibility could be selected, out of even a very small number of persons, as those of a remarkable personage. . . . His voice is agreeable, and its intonations delightful, although that is so common a gift with Englishmen as to be almost a national characteristic.

(*J. L. Motley, 1858*)



His appearance and bearing in conversation were singularly effective. Sitting bolt upright, his hands resting on the arms of his chair or folded over the handle of his walking-stick ;—knitting his great eyebrows if the subject was one which had to be thought out as he went along, or brightening from the forehead downwards when a burst of humour was coming ;—his

massive features and honest glance suited well with the manly sagacious sentiments which he set forth in his pleasant sonorous voice, and in his racy and admirably intelligible language. To get at his meaning people had never the need to think twice, and they certainly had seldom the time. And with all his ardour, and all his strength and energy of conviction, he was so truly considerate towards others, so delicately courteous with the courtesy which is of the essence and not only in the manner !

(Sir G. O. Trevelyan)



On Sunday dined with Rogers, Moore, Sydney Smith, Macaulay. Sydney less vivacious than usual, and somewhat overpowered and talked down by what Moore called the “*flumen sermonis*” of Macaulay. Sydney calls Macaulay “a book in breeches.” All that this latter says, all that he writes, exhibits his great powers and astonishing information, but I don’t think he is agreeable. It is more than society requires, and not exactly of the kind ; his figure, face, voice, and manner are all bad ; he astonishes and instructs, he sometimes entertains, seldom amuses, and still seldomer pleases. He wants variety, elasticity, gracefulness ; he is a roaring torrent, and not a meandering stream of talk. I believe we should all of us have been glad to exchange some of his sense for some of Sydney Smith’s nonsense.

(Charles Greville, 1833)

He was always willing to accept a friendly challenge to a feat of memory. One day, in the Board Room of the British Museum, Sir David Dundas saw him hand to Lord Aberdeen a sheet of foolscap covered with writing arranged in three parallel columns down each of the four pages. This document, of which the ink was still wet, proved to be a full list of the Senior Wranglers at Cambridge with their dates and colleges, for the hundred years during which the names of Senior Wranglers had been recorded in the University Calendar. On another occasion Sir David asked : " Macaulay, do you know your Popes ? " " No," was the answer ; " I always get wrong among the Innocents." " But can you say your Archbishops of Canterbury ? " " Any fool," said Macaulay, " could say his Archbishops of Canterbury backwards : " and he went off at score, drawing breath only once in order to remark on the oddity of there having been both an Archbishop Sancroft and an Archbishop Bancroft, until Sir David stopped him at Cranmer.

(Sir G. O. Trevelyan)



I always prophesied his greatness from the first moment I saw him, then a very young and unknown man, on the Northern Circuit. There are no limits to his knowledge, on small subjects as well as great ; he is like a book in breeches. . . . Yes, I agree, he is certainly more agreeable

since his return from India. His enemies might perhaps have said before (though I never did so) that he talked rather too much ; but now he has occasional flashes of silence, that make his conversation perfectly delightful. But what is far better and more important than all this is, that I believe Macaulay to be incorruptible. You might lay ribbons, stars, garters, wealth, titles, before him in vain. He has an honest genuine love of his country, and the world could not bribe him to neglect her interests.

(Sydney Smith)

JOHN CHURCHILL

1st Duke of Marlborough (1650-1722)

He was a man of a noble and graceful appearance, bred up in the court with no literature : but he had a solid and clear understanding, with a constant presence of mind. He knew the arts of living in a court beyond any man in it. He caressed all people with a soft and obliging deportment, and was always ready to do good offices. He had no fortune to set up on : this put him on all the methods of acquiring one. And that went so far into him, that he did not shake it off when he was in a much higher elevation : nor was his expense suited enough to his posts. But, when allowances are made for that, it must be acknowledged that he is one of the greatest men the age has produced.

(Bishop Burnet)

☞ ☞ ☞

He is covetous as Hell, and ambitious as the prince of it : he would fain have been general for life, and has broken all endeavours for peace, to keep his greatness and get money.

(Dean Swift)

☞ ☞ ☞

In his last decline at Bath he was playing with Dean Jones at piquet for sixpence a game. They played a good while, and then the duke left

off when winner of one game. Some time after he desired the dean to pay him his sixpence. The dean said he had no silver. The duke asked him for it over and over, and at last desired that he would change a guinea to pay it him, because he should want it to pay the chair that carried him home. The dean, after so much pressing, did at last get change,—paid the duke his sixpence,—observed him a little after leave the room,—and declares that, after all the bustle that had been made for his sixpence, the duke actually walked home to save the little expense a chair would have put him to.

(Spence's Anecdotes)



Inconsistent as the Duke of Marlborough's character may appear to you, yet, may it be accounted for, if you gauge his actions by his reigning passion, which was the love of money. He endeavoured, at the same time, to be well both at Hanover and at St. Germain's ; this surprised you a good deal when I first told you of it ; but the plain meaning of it was only this, that he wanted to secure the vast riches he had amassed together, whichever should succeed. He was calm in the heat of battle ; and when he was so near being taken prisoner (in his first campaign) in Flanders, he was quite unmoved. It is true, he was like to lose his life in the one, and his liberty in the other ; but there was none of his money at stake in either. This mean passion

of that great man operated very strongly in him in the very beginning of his life, and continued to the very end of it.

(*A. Pope*)



Of all the men that ever I knew (and I knew him extremely well) the late Duke of Marlborough possessed the Graces in the highest degree, not to say engrossed them ; and indeed, he got the most by them, for I will venture (contrary to the custom of profound historians, who always assign deep causes for great events) to ascribe the better half of the Duke of Marlborough's greatness and riches to those Graces. He was eminently illiterate ; wrote bad English, and spelled it still worse. He had no share of what is commonly called *parts* ; that is, he had no brightness, nothing shining in his genius. He had, most undoubtedly, an excellent good plain understanding, with sound judgment. But these would probably have raised him but something higher than they found him, which was page to King James the Second's Queen. Here the Graces protected and promoted him ; for, while he was an Ensign of the Guards, the Duchess of Cleveland, then favourite mistress to King Charles the Second, struck by those very Graces, gave him five thousand pounds, with which he immediately bought an annuity for his life of five hundred pounds a year . . . which was the foundation of his subsequent fortune. His figure

was beautiful, but his manner was irresistible, by either man or woman. It was by this engaging, graceful manner, that he was enabled, during all his war, to connect the various and jarring powers of the Grand Alliance, and to carry them on to the main object of the war, notwithstanding their private and separate views, jealousies, and wrong-headnesses. Whatever Court he went to (and he was often obliged to go himself to some resty and refractory ones), he as constantly prevailed, and brought them into his measures. . . . He was always cool, and nobody ever observed the least variation in his countenance ; he could refuse more gracefully than other people could grant ; and those who went away from him the most dissatisfied as to the substance of their business, were yet personally charmed with him, and, in some degree comforted by his manner. With all his gentleness and gracefulness, no man living was more conscious of his situation, nor maintained his dignity better.

(Earl of Chesterfield)

ANDREW MARVELL (1621-1678)

He was of a middling stature, pretty strong set, roundish face, cherry cheeked, hazel eye, brown hair. He was in his conversation very modest, and of very few words.



His native town of Hull loved him so well that they elected him for their representative in Parliament, and gave him an honourable pension to maintain him.

(John Aubrey)



He made himself obnoxious to the Government, both in his actions and writings; and, notwithstanding his proceedings were all contrary to his private interest, nothing could ever shake his resolution. He having one night been entertained by the King [Charles II], who had been often delighted in his company, his Majesty the next day sent the Lord Treasurer Danby to find out his lodging. Mr. Marvell, who then lodged up two pair of stairs in a little court in the Strand, was writing when the Lord Treasurer opened the door abruptly upon him. Surprised at the sight of so unexpected a visitor, he told him he believed he had mistook his way. The Lord Danby replied, "Not now I have found Mr. Marvell," telling him that he came with a



ANDREW MARVELL
From an engraving

message from his Majesty, which was to know what he could do to serve him. His answer was, in his usual facetious manner, that it was not in his Majesty's power to serve him. But coming to a serious explanation of his meaning, he told the Lord Treasurer he knew the nature of Courts full well, he had been in many ; that whoever is distinguished by a Prince's favours is certainly expected to vote in his interest. The Lord Danby told him, his Majesty had only a just sense of his merits, in regard to which alone he desired to know whether there was any place at Court he could be pleased with. These offers had no effect on him, though urged with the greatest earnestness. He told the Lord Treasurer he could not accept them with honour, for he must be either ungrateful to the King in voting against him, or false to his country in giving in to the measures of the Court ; therefore the only favour he begged of his Majesty was, that he would esteem him as dutiful a subject as any he had, and more in his proper interest in refusing his offers, than if he had embraced them. The Lord Danby, finding no arguments could prevail, told him the King his master had ordered a thousand pounds for him, which he hoped he would receive, till he could think what farther to ask of his Majesty. This last offer was rejected with the same steadfastness of mind, as was the first ; though, as soon as the Lord Treasurer was gone, he was forced to send to a friend to borrow a guinea.

(Thomas Cooke)

JOHN MILTON (1608-1674)

He had light brown hair. His complexion exceeding fair, (he was so fair that they called him the Lady of Christ's College). Oval face, his eye a dark gray. . . . He was an early riser, at 4 o'clock, yea, after he lost his sight. He had a man read to him. The first thing he read was the Hebrew Bible. . . . At 7 his man came to him again, and then read to him and wrote till dinner. . . . His 2nd daughter, Deborah, could read to him Latin, Italian, French, and Greek. . . . After dinner he used to walk 3 or four hours at a time (he always had a garden where he lived); went to bed abt 9. Temperate, rarely drank between meals. Extreme pleasant in his conversation, and at dinner, supper, etc. but satirical. He pronounced the letter R very hard. He had a delicate tuneable voice, and had good skill. His father instructed him. He had an organ in his house, he played on this most.

He was visited by learned much more than he did desire. He was mightily importuned to go into France and Italy; foreigners came much to see him, and much admired him, and offered to him great preferments to come over to them, and the only inducement of several foreigners that came over into England, was chiefly to see O. Protector, [Oliver Cromwell] and Mr. J. Milton; and would see the *house and chamber* where he was born. He was much more admired abroad than at home.

Of a very cheerful humour. He was very healthy, and free from all diseases, only towards his latter end he was visited with the gout, spring and fall. He would be very cheerful even in his gout-fits, and sing.

(John Aubrey)



. . . John Milton, a gentleman of great note for learning throughout the learned world, for the accurate pieces he had written on various subjects and occasions. This person, having filled a public station in the former times, lived now a private and retired life in London, and having wholly lost his sight, kept always a man to read to him, which usually was the son of some gentleman of his acquaintance, whom in kindness he took to improve in his learning. . . . I went therefore and took myself a lodging as near to his house (which was then in Jewyn Street) as conveniently as I could, and from thenceforward went every day in the afternoon, except on the first days of the week, and sitting by him in his dining room read to him in such books in the Latin tongue as he pleased to hear me read.

At my first sitting to read to him, observing that I used the English pronunciation, he told me, if I would have the benefit of the Latin tongue, not only to read and understand Latin authors, but to converse with foreigners, either abroad or at home, I must learn the foreign pronunciation. To this I consenting, he instructed me how to sound the vowels ; so different

from the common pronunciation used by the English, who speak Anglice their Latin, that—with some few other variations in sounding some consonants in particular cases, as *c* before *e* or *i* like *ch*, *sc* before *i* like *sh*, etc.—the Latin thus spoken seemed as different from that which was delivered, as the English generally speak it, as if it were another language. . . . This change of pronunciation proved a new difficulty to me. It was now harder to me to read than it was before to understand when read. But

Labor omnia vincit

Improbis

Incessant pains

The end obtains.

And so did I. Which made my reading the more acceptable to my master. He, on the other hand, perceiving with what earnest desire I pursued learning, gave me not only all the encouragement but all the help he could ; for, having a curious ear, he understood by my tone when I understood what I read and when I did not ; and accordingly would stop me, examine me, and open the most difficult passages to me.

(*Thomas Ellwood*)

THOMAS MOORE (1779-1852)

Moore's forehead was bony and full of character, with "bumps" of wit, large and radiant enough to transport a phrenologist. Sterne had such another. His eyes were as dark and fine as you would wish to see under a set of vine-leaves; his mouth generous and good humoured, with dimples; and his manner as bright as his talk, full of the wish to please and be pleased. He sang, and played with great taste on the pianoforte, as might be supposed from his musical compositions. His voice, which was a little hoarse in speaking (at least I used to think so), softened into a breath, like that of the flute, when singing.

(Leigh Hunt)



Tom Moore's is the most exquisite warbling I ever heard.

(J. L. Lockhart)



Yesterday I dined in Portland Place and went in the evening to Downing Street, where I found Tommy Moore at the pianoforte, playing and singing his own melodies; and very much delighted I was with his performance.

(Thomas Creevey)



Moore has a peculiarity of talent, or rather talents—poetry, music, voice, all his own; and an expression in each, which never was, nor will

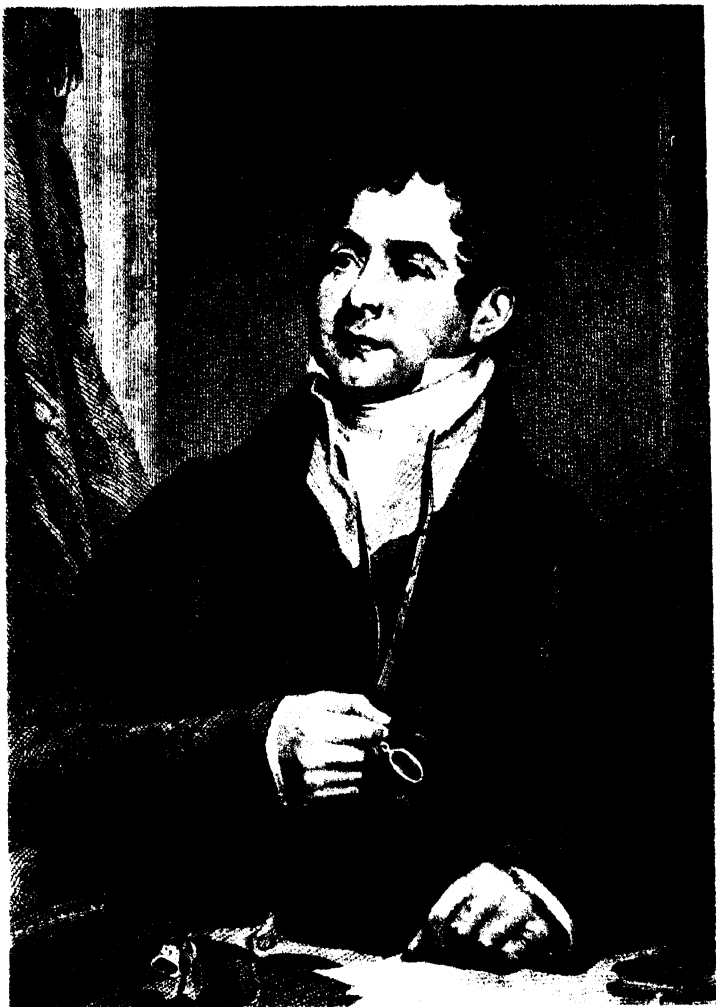
be, possessed by another. . . . In society, he is gentlemanly, gentle, and, altogether, more pleasing than any individual with whom I am acquainted. . . . He has but one fault—and that one I daily regret—he is not *here*.

(Lord Byron)



There is a manly frankness, with perfect ease and good breeding, about him which is delightful. Not the least touch of the poet or the pedant. A little—very little man. . . . His countenance is plain, but the expression so very animated, especially in speaking or singing, that it is far more interesting than the finest features could have rendered.

I was aware that Byron had often spoken, both in private society and in his journal, of Moore and myself, in the same breath, and with the same sort of regard ; so I was curious to see what there could be in common betwixt us, Moore having lived so much in the gay world, I in the country, and with people of business, and sometimes with politicians ; Moore a scholar, I none ; he a musician and artist, I without knowledge of a note ; he a democrat, I an aristocrat—with many other points of difference ; besides his being an Irishman, I a Scotchman, and both tolerably national. Yet there is a point of resemblance, and a strong one. We are both good-humoured fellows, who rather seek to enjoy what is going forward than to



THOMAS MOORE
From an engraving

maintain our dignity as Lions ; and we have both seen the world too widely and too well not to condemn in our souls the imaginary consequence of literary people, who walk with their noses in the air. . . . It would be a delightful addition to life, if T. M. had a cottage within two miles of one.

(Sir Walter Scott, 1825)

HORATIO VISCOUNT NELSON

(1758-1805)

August 26, 1805.—As I was standing in a shop in the Strand, this morning, I had the satisfaction, which I had long wished for, of seeing Lord Nelson. He was walking through the streets, on the opposite side, in company with his chaplain, and, as usual, followed by a crowd. This is a distinction which great men are obliged to share in common with all wonderful exhibitions ; a dancing bear would immediately attract a throng in the streets of London, and this great admiral can do no more in the same circumstances. If it be a gratification, while it is new, it must soon become extremely troublesome. Lord Nelson cannot appear in the streets without immediately collecting a retinue, which augments as he proceeds, and when he enters a shop, the door is thronged till he comes out, when the air rings with huzzas, and the dark cloud of the populace again moves on and hangs upon his skirts.

He is a great favourite with all descriptions of people ; the nation are wonderfully proud of him, and, although his late unwearied pursuit of the French and Spanish squadrons has proved fruitless, the enthusiastic admiration in which he has long been held does not seem to be in the least diminished.

My view of him was in profile. His features

are sharp and his skin is now very much burnt, from his having been long at sea ; he has the balancing gait of a sailor ; his person is spare and of about the middle height or rather more and mutilated by the loss of an arm and an eye, besides many other injuries of less magnitude.

It was certainly a rational source of satisfaction to behold the first naval character of the age, a man whom his contemporaries admire and posterity will applaud. His very name is at this moment, under providence, a palladium to this island, and no hostile fleet can meet him without dreading the event of the interview.



. . . I happened without any design, or previous knowledge of the circumstance, to witness the embarkation of Lord Nelson. I do not say this to excuse myself from the charge of being influenced by that active curiosity which, for hours that day, kept Portsmouth in agitation, to see the hero embark whom they had so often seen before ; on the contrary, I thought myself happy to behold again, and under circumstances so peculiarly interesting, the man on whom the eyes of all Britain, and indeed Europe and America, are at this moment fixed. His late fruitless pursuit of the formidable squadrons of France and Spain, twice through the Mediterranean and twice across the Atlantic, with the safe return of that squadron to the ports of Spain,

and the lively apprehension of some great enterprise about to be undertaken by it, has excited the feelings of the nation, and his own, to a high pitch of daring, and he now goes in the *Victory* to command off Ferrol and Cadiz, with a view to watch the farther motions of the hostile fleets.

Lord Nelson, who had been doing business on shore, preparatory to his contemplated expedition, endeavoured to elude the populace, who were assembled in great numbers in the street through which he was expected to pass. He went out through a back door and through a by-lane, attended only by Admiral Coffin and a few private gentlemen. But, by the time he had arrived on the beach, some hundreds of people had collected in his train, pressing all around, and pushing to get a little before him to obtain a sight of his face. I stood on one of the batteries near which he passed, and had a full view of his person. He was elegantly dressed, and his blue coat was splendidly illuminated with stars and ribbons. As the barge in which he embarked pushed away from the shore, the people gave him three cheers, which his lordship returned by waving his hat. . . .

This was the last act of respect which Lord Nelson ever received, while living, from his countrymen. It is well known that he then left England for ever, and lost his life on the 21st of October at the great battle of Trafalgar.

*(Benjamin Silliman, an American visitor,
in his "Travels in England," 1805-6)*

Of his daily life on board [the Victory] and intercourse with others, we have intimations, fragmentary yet sufficient. "Our days," he himself says, "pass so much alike that, having described one, you have them all. We now [October] breakfast by candle light; and all retire, at eight o'clock, to bed." "We cruise, cruise, and one day so like another that they are hardly distinguishable, but *hopes*, blessed *hopes*, keep us up, that some happy day the French may come out, then I shall consider my duty to my country fulfilled." Of one of these monotonous days we have received a description from an officer [Dr. Gillespie], a member of the admiral's mess, who had then too lately entered upon them to feel the full weight of their deadly sameness.

"At 6 o'clock my servant brings a light and informs me of the hour, wind, weather, and course of the ship, when I immediately dress and generally repair to the deck, the dawn of day at this season and latitude being apparent at about half or three-quarters of an hour past six. Breakfast is announced in the Admiral's cabin, where Lord Nelson, Rear Admiral Murray, (the Captain of the Fleet,) Captain Hardy, commander of the Victory, the chaplain, secretary, one or two officers of the ship, and your humble servant assemble and breakfast on tea, hot rolls, toast, cold tongue, &c., which when finished we repair upon deck to enjoy the majestic sight of the rising sun (scarcely ever obscured by clouds in this

fine climate) surmounting the smooth and placid waves of the Mediterranean, which supports the lofty and tremendous bulwarks of Britain, following in regular train their admiral in the Victory. Between the hours of 7 and 2 there is plenty of time for business, study, writing, and exercise, which different occupations I endeavour to vary in such a manner as to afford me sufficient employment. At 2 o'clock a band of music plays till within a quarter of three, when the drum beats the tune called, 'The Roast Beef of Old England' to announce the Admiral's dinner, which is served up exactly at 3 o'clock, and which generally consists of three courses and a dessert of the choicest fruit [a fact which bespeaks the frequency of communications with the land], together with three or four of the best wines, champagne and claret not excepted. If a person does not feel himself perfectly at his ease it must be his own fault, such is the urbanity and hospitality which reign here, notwithstanding the numerous titles, the four orders of Knighthood, worn by Lord Nelson, and the well earned laurels which he has acquired. Coffee and liqueurs close the dinner about half-past 4 or 5 o'clock, after which the company generally walk the deck where the band of music plays for nearly an hour. At 6 o'clock tea is announced, when the company again assemble in the Admiral's cabin, where tea is served up before 7 o'clock, and, as we are inclined, the party continue to converse with his lordship, who at this time generally unbends

himself, though he is at all times as free from stiffness and pomp as a regard to proper dignity will admit, and is very communicative. At 8 o'clock a rummer of punch with cake or biscuit is served up, soon after which we wish the Admiral a good night (who is generally in bed before 9 o'clock). Such is the journal of a day at sea in fine or at least moderate weather, in which this floating castle goes through the water with the greatest imaginable steadiness."

(From Captain A. T. Mahan's Life of Nelson)



Nelson was a good fly fisher, and as a proof of his passion for it, continued the pursuit even with his left hand. I have known a person who fished with him at Merton, in the Wandle.

(Sir Humphry Davy)



Wasn't you sorry for Nelson? I have followed him in fancy ever since I saw him walk in Pall Mall, (I was prejudiced against him before) looking just as a hero should look; and I have been very much cut about it indeed. He was the only pretence of a great man we had.

(Charles Lamb, in a letter to Hazlitt, Nov. 18th, 1805)



As for the illustrious naval hero, who fell in the glorious action of Trafalgar, his fame is

exalted on a pedestal, which envy cannot scale, and his funeral triumph carried with it to his grave the hearts of the whole nation. I walked about the streets of the capital on the night of the intelligence, which reached us of his victory and of his death ; I remarked with peculiar satisfaction the divided feelings of the common people ; they knew not how to rejoice, yet they wanted a triumph ; the occasion demanded it, but they were unfitted for enforcing and disqualified from enjoying it : I was charmed with their dilemma.

(Richard Cumberland)

THE MEETING OF NELSON AND WELLINGTON

Walmer, October 1st, 1834.

We were talking of Lord Nelson, and some instances were mentioned of the egotism and vanity that derogated from his character. "Why," said the Duke, "I am not surprised at such instances, for Lord Nelson was, in different circumstances two quite different men, as I myself can vouch, though I only saw him once in my life, and for, perhaps, an hour. It was soon after I returned from India. I went to the Colonial Office in Downing Street, and there I was shown into the little waiting-room on the right hand, where I found, also waiting to see the Secretary of State, a gentleman, whom, from his likeness to his pictures and the loss of an arm, I immediately recognised as Lord Nelson. He could not know who I was, but he entered at once into conversation with me, if I can call it conversation, for it was almost all on his side and all about himself, and in, really, a style so vain and so silly as to surprise and almost disgust me. I suppose something that I happened to say may have made him guess that I was *somebody*, and he went out of the room for a moment, I have no doubt to ask the office-keeper who I was, for when he came back he was altogether a different man, both in manner and matter. All that I had thought a charlatan style had vanished, and he

talked of the state of this country and of the aspect and probabilities of affairs on the Continent with a good sense, and a knowledge of subjects both at home and abroad, that surprised me equally and more agreeably than the first part of our interview had done ; in fact, he talked like an officer and a statesman. The Secretary of State kept us long waiting, and certainly, for the last half or three quarters of an hour, I don't know that I ever had a conversation that interested me more. Now, if the Secretary of State had been punctual, and admitted Lord Nelson in the first quarter of an hour, I should have had the same impression of a light and trivial character that other people have had ; but luckily I saw enough to be satisfied that he was really a very superior man ; but certainly a more sudden and complete metamorphosis I never saw."

(John Wilson Croker)

SIR ISAAC NEWTON

(1642-1727)

He always lived in a very handsome generous manner, though without ostentation or vanity ; always hospitable, and upon proper occasions gave splendid entertainments. He was generous and charitable without bounds ; he used to say, that they who gave away nothing till they died, never gave. . . . I believe no man of his circumstances ever gave away so much during his lifetime in alms, in encouraging ingenuity and learning, and to his relations, nor upon all occasions showed a greater contempt of his own money, or a more scrupulous frugality of that which belonged to the public, or to any society he was intrusted for. He refused pensions and additional employments that were offered him.

He was of a middle stature, and plump in his latter years ; he had a very lively and piercing eye, a comely and gracious aspect, and a fine head of hair, as white as silver, without any baldness ; and, when his peruke was off, was a venerable sight. And to his last illness, he had the bloom and colour of a young man, and never wore spectacles, nor lost more than one tooth till the day of his death. . . . He ate little flesh, and lived chiefly upon broth, vegetables and fruit, of which he always ate very heartily.

(*John Conduitt*)

M

Sir Isaac Newton told Mr. Conduitt that he had often heard his mother say that when he was born he was so little that they might have put him into a quart mug.

(*Sir David Brewster*)



If all the geniuses of the universe assembled, he should lead the band.

(*Voltaire*)



If Newton had flourished in ancient Greece, he would have been worshipped as a Divinity.

(*Dr. Johnson*)



Nature, and Nature's laws, lay hid in night ;
God said, Let Newton be ! and all was light.



Sir Isaac Newton, though so deep in Algebra and Fluxions, could not readily make up a common account : and when he was Master of the Mint, used to get somebody to make up his accounts for him.

(*A. Pope*)



I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.

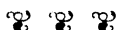
(*Sir Isaac Newton, on himself*)

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

(1820-1910)

What a comfort it was to see her pass even. She would speak to one and nod and smile to as many more ; but she could not do it to all you know. We lay there by hundreds ; but we could kiss her shadow as it fell, and lay our heads on the pillow again content.

(From a soldier's letter home, from the Crimea)



She is tall, very straight and willowy in figure ; thick and shortish rich brown hair ; very delicate complexion ; grey eyes, which are generally pensive and drooping, but when they choose can be the merriest eyes I ever saw ; and perfect teeth, making her smile the sweetest I ever saw. Put a long piece of soft net, and tie it round this beautifully shaped head, so as to form a soft white framework for the full oval of her face . . . and dress her up in black silk, high up the long white round throat, and with a black shawl on, and you may get *near* an idea of her perfect grace and lovely appearance.

(Mrs. Gaskell)



Windsor Castle

(January) 1856.

Dear Miss Nightingale,—

You are, I know, well aware of the high sense I entertain of the Christian devotion which

you have displayed during this great and bloody war, and I need hardly repeat to you how warm my admiration is for your services, which are fully equal to those of my dear and brave soldiers, whose sufferings you have had the *privilege* of alleviating in so merciful a manner. I am, however, anxious of marking my feelings in a manner which I trust will be agreeable to you, and therefore send you with this letter a brooch, the form and emblems of which commemorate your great and blessed work, and which, I hope, you will wear as a mark of the high approbation of your Sovereign !

It will be a very great satisfaction to me, when you return at last to these shores, to make the acquaintance of one who has set so bright an example to our sex. And with every prayer for the preservation of your valuable health, believe me, always, yours sincerely,

Victoria R.

(“*Letters of Queen Victoria*,” 1837–1861)

SAMUEL PEPYS (1633-1703)

1703, *May 26th*.—This day died Mr. Sam. Pepys, a very worthy, industrious, and curious person, none in England exceeding him in knowledge of the navy, in which he passed thro' all the most considerable offices, Clerk of the Acts and Secretary of the Admiralty, all which he performed with great integrity. When K. James II went out of England, he laid down his office, and would serve no more, but withdrawing himself from all public affairs, he liv'd at Clapham with his partner Mr. Hewer, formerly his clerk, in a very noble and sweet place, where he enjoyed the fruits of his labours in great prosperity. He was universally belov'd, hospitable, generous, learned in many things, skill'd in music, a very great cherisher of learned men of whom he had the conversation. . . . Mr. Pepys had been for near 40 years so much my particular friend that Mr. Jackson sent me complete mourning, desiring me to be one to hold up his pall at his magnificent obsequies, but my indisposition hinder'd me from doing him this last office.

(*John Evelyn*)

HESTHER LYNCH PIOZZI (THRALE)

(1741-1821)

Mrs. Thrale was short, plump and brisk. She has herself given us a lively view of the idea which Johnson had of her person, on appearing before him in a dark-coloured gown: "You little creatures should never wear those sort of clothes, however; they are unsuitable in every way. What! have not all insects gay colours?"

(James Boswell)



The kindness and honours I meet with from this charming family are greater than I can mention; sweet Mrs. Thrale hardly suffers me to leave her a moment; and Dr. Johnson is another Daddy Crisp to me, for he has a partial goodness to your Fannikin, that has made him smile at comparative shortness of our acquaintance, and treat and think of me as one who had long claim on him.

If you knew these two you would love them, or I don't know you as well as I think I do—Dr. Johnson has more fun and comical humour, and love of nonsense about him, than almost anybody I ever saw: I mean when with those he likes; for otherwise, he can be as severe and as bitter as repute relates him. Mrs. Thrale has all that gaiety of disposition and lightness of heart, which commonly belong to fifteen.

(Fanny Burney to Samuel Crisp,
from Streatham, March, 1779)

WILLIAM PITT (1759-1806)

AND

CHARLES JAMES FOX (1749-1806)

Although Mr. Pitt remained silent with respect to the motion [in the House of Commons] on the state of the army, I had the pleasure of hearing the great man speak a few minutes on a petition which he handed in. There was nothing in the subject which calls for a display of eloquence ; he made simply a statement of facts, but this served to identify his voice and manner. In his person he is tall and spare ; he has small limbs with large knees and feet ; his features are sharp ; his nose large, pointed, and turning up ; his complexion sanguine ; his voice deep-toned and commanding, yet sweet and perfectly modulated, and his whole presence, notwithstanding the want of symmetry in his limbs, is, when he rises to speak, full of superiority and conscious dignity. I had a distinct view of him for six hours, during which time he sat directly before me. His dress was a blue coat with metallic buttons, a white vest, black satin breeches, and white silk stockings, with large buckles in his shoes. His hair was powdered. Notwithstanding the violence of the opposition, and their having been so long accustomed to his voice, when he rose the House became so quiet that a whisper might have been heard from any part.

Mr. Fox was also present. His person is very

lusty. His neck is short ; his head large, round, and now quite grey ; his chest is broad and prominent, and his body and limbs vast and corpulent, even for England. His complexion is dark, his features large, eyes blue, close together, and of uncommon size, and his whole appearance peculiar, noble and commanding. His hair was not powdered ; he wore a blue coat, with buff cassimere under dress and white silk stockings.

I saw him in numerous situations, for he seemed very uneasy, and changed his place many times ; he walked about—went out and came in—went up gallery and down, and was almost constantly in motion. He spoke a few minutes on a petition from a person imprisoned in Ireland for treason. His remarks were very pertinent to the case, his manner flowing, easy, and natural, but without the dignity and impressiveness of Pitt. He stood leaning forward, as if going up hill, and his fists were clenched and thrust into his waistcoat pockets. The caricatures both of him and of Mr. Pitt are very correct, with the usual allowance for the extravagance of this kind of prints.

(Benjamin Silliman, 1805-6)



My father once took me—but I cannot say at what period of my juvenility—into both houses of Parliament. In the Commons, I saw Mr. Pitt sawing the air, and occasionally turning to appeal to those about him, while he spoke in

a loud, important, and hollow voice. When the persons he appealed to said "Hear ! Hear !" I thought they said "Dear ! dear !" in objection ; and I wondered that he did not seem in the least degree disconcerted.



I saw Mr. Fox, fat and jovial, though he was then declining. He who had been a beau in his youth, then looked somewhat quakerlike as to dress, with plain coloured clothes, a broad round hat, white waistcoat, and, if I am not mistaken, white stockings. He was standing in Parliament Street, just where the street commences as you leave Whitehall ; and was making two young gentlemen laugh heartily at something which he seemed to be relating.

(Leigh Hunt)

ALEXANDER POPE (1688-1744)

Pope was from his birth of a constitution tender and delicate, but is said to have shown remarkable gentleness and sweetness of disposition. The weakness of his body continued through his life ; but the mildness of his mind perhaps ended with his childhood. His voice, when he was young, was so pleasing, that he was called in fondness the “ little nightingale.”

(*Dr. Johnson*)



His weakness was so great that he constantly wore stays, as I have been assured by a waterman at Twickenham, who, in lifting him into his boat, had often felt them. His method of taking the air on the water was to have a sedan chair in the boat, in which he sat with the glasses down.

(*Sir John Hawkins*)



I never in my life knew a man that had so tender a heart for his particular friends, or a more general friendship for mankind.

(*Lord Bolingbroke*)



You are the best and kindest friend in the world, and I know nobody, alive or dead, to whom I am so much obliged ; and if ever you made me angry, it was for your too much care about me.

(*Swift, to Pope*)

He did not know anything of the value of money ; and his greatest delight was in doing good offices to his friends. I used to know, by his particular vivacity, and the pleasure that appeared on his face, when he came to town on such errands, or when he was employed in them, which was very often.

(*Martha Blount*)



I must condole with you for the loss of Mrs. Pope, of whose death the papers have been full. But I would rather rejoice with you, because, if any circumstances can make the death of a dear parent and friend a subject for joy, you have them all. She died in an extreme old age, without pain, under the care of the most dutiful son that I have ever known or heard of, which is a felicity not happening to one in a million.

(*Swift, to Pope, July 8th, 1733*)



Mr. Pope never flattered anybody for money, in the whole course of his writing. Alderman Barber had a great inclination to have a stroke in his commendation inserted in some part of Mr. Pope's writings. He did not want money, and he wanted fame. He would probably have given four or five thousand pounds to have been gratified in this desire : and gave Mr. Pope to understand as much, but Mr. Pope would never comply with such a baseness.

(*Bishop Warburton*)

The mornings are my life ; in the evenings I am not dead indeed, but sleep and am stupid enough. I love reading still, better than conversation : but my eyes fail, and at the hours when most people indulge in company, I am tired, and find the labour of the past day sufficient to weigh me down. So I hide myself in bed, as a bird in his nest, much about the same time, and raise and chirp the earlier in the morning. I often vary the scene (indeed at every friend's call) from London to Twickenham ; or the contrary, to receive them, or be received by them.

(Pope, to Swift, 1739)

WILLIAM DOUGLAS

4th Duke of Queensberry (1724-1810)

The late Duke of Queensberry, whom I remember in my early days—called “Old Q”,—was of the same school as the Marshal Duc de Richelieu in France, and as great a profligate. He lived at the bow-window house in Piccadilly, where he was latterly always seen, looking at the people who passed by ; a groom on horseback, known as Jack Radford, always stood under the window, to carry about his messages to any one whom he remarked in the street. He kept a physician in the house, and to ensure attention to his health, his terms were that he should have so much per day while he lived, but not a shilling at his death. When he drove out, he was alone in a dark green vis-à-vis, with long-tailed black horses ; and during winter, with a muff, two servants behind in undress, and his groom following the carriage, to execute his commissions. He was a little sharp-looking man, very irritable, and swore like ten thousand troopers : enormously rich and selfish.

(Thomas Raikes)



After exhausting all the gratifications of human life, towards its close he sat down at his residence, near Hyde Park Corner, where he remained a spectator of the moving scene, which

Johnson denominated "the full tide of human existence," but in which he could no longer take a very active part. I lived in almost daily habits of intercourse with him, when I was in London, during the last seven years of his protracted career. His person had then become a ruin, but not so his mind. Seeing only with one eye, hearing very imperfectly only with one ear, nearly toothless, and labouring under multiplied infirmities, he possessed all his intellectual faculties, including his memory. Never did any man retain more animation, or manifest a sounder judgment. Even his figure, though emaciated, still remained elegant; his manners were noble and polished, his conversation gay, always entertaining, generally original, rarely instructive, frequently libertine, indicating a strong, sagacious, masculine intellect, with a thorough knowledge of man. If I were compelled to name the particular individual who had received from nature the keenest common sense of any person I ever knew, I should select the Duke of Queensberry.

. . . Known to be immensely rich, destitute of issue, and unmarried, he formed a mark at which every necessitous man or woman throughout the metropolis directed their aim. It is a fact that, when he lay dying in December 1810, his bed was covered with billets and letters to the number of at least seventy, mostly indeed addressed to him by females of every description, and of every rank, from Duchesses down to ladies of the easiest virtue! Unable from his



DUKE OF QUEENSBERRY

From an engraving

extenuated state to open or to peruse them, he ordered them, as they arrived, to be laid on his bed, where they remained, the seals unbroken, till he expired.



Many fabulous stories were circulated and believed respecting him, as, among others, that he wore a glass eye, that he used milk baths, and other idle tales. It is, however, a fact that the Duke performed in his own drawing-room the scene of Paris and the goddesses. Three of the most beautiful females to be found in London presented themselves before him precisely as the divinities of Homer are supposed to have appeared to Paris on Mount Ida, while he, habited like the "Dardan Shepherd," holding a gilded apple in his hand, conferred the prize on her whom he deemed the fairest. This classic exhibition took place at his house opposite the Green Park.

(Sir N. W. Wraxall)



The celebrated William Wilberforce used to mention that, when a young man, he was invited to dine with the Duke of Queensberry at Richmond. "I always observe," he used to say, "that the owners of your grand houses have some snug corner in which they are glad to shelter themselves from their own magnificence. I remember dining, when I was a young man, with

the Duke of Queensberry, at his Richmond villa. The party was very small and select ; Pitt, Lord and Lady Chatham, the Duchess of Gordon, and George Selwyn (who lived for society, and continued in it till he looked really like the wax-work figure of a corpse) were among the guests. We dined early, that some of our party might be ready to attend the Opera. The dinner was sumptuous, the views from the villa quite enchanting, and the Thames in all its glory ; but the Duke looked on with indifference. ‘ What is there,’ he said, ‘ to make so much of in the Thames ? I am quite tired of it—there it goes, flow, flow, flow, always the same.’ ”

In the last years of his life the Duke of Queensberry reluctantly withdrew himself from the society of the clubs in St. James’s Street, and confined himself almost entirely to his mansion in Piccadilly, and to the society of a few chosen friends. His love of music, however, or rather, perhaps, his passion for the *figurantes* in the *ballet*, appears to have long survived his powers of enjoyment, and, to the close of his long career, he was almost constantly to be seen in his box at the Opera.

In fine sunny weather, it was the custom of the Duke to seat himself in his balcony in Piccadilly, where his figure was familiar to every person who was in the habit of passing through that great thoroughfare. Here, (his emaciated figure, rendered the more conspicuous from his custom of holding a parasol over his head,) he was

in the habit of watching every attractive form, and ogling every pretty face that met his eye. He is said, indeed, to have kept a pony and a servant in constant readiness, in order to follow, and ascertain the residence of any fair girl whose attractions particularly caught his fancy.

(J. H. Jesse)

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS (1723-1792)

The most invulnerable man he knew ; whom, if he should quarrel with him, he should find the most difficulty how to abuse.

(*Dr. Johnson*)



As to his person,—in his stature Sir Joshua Reynolds was rather under the middle size, of a florid complexion, roundish blunt features, and a lively aspect,—not corpulent, though somewhat inclined to it, but extremely active,—with manners uncommonly polished and agreeable. In conversation, his manner was perfectly natural, simple, and unassuming. He most heartily enjoyed his profession, in which he was both fortunate and illustrious, and I agree with Mr. Malone who says he appeared to him to be the happiest man he had ever known ! He was thoroughly sensible of his rare lot in life, and truly thankful for it ; his virtues were blessed with their full reward.

(*James Northcote, R.A.*)



He was the first Englishman who added the praise of the elegant arts to the other glories of his country.

(*Edmund Burke*)



“ Damn him, how various he is ! ” exclaimed Gainsborough, as he passed before the pictures

of Reynolds, in one of the exhibitions.—“ I cannot think how he produces his effects,” said Reynolds, when examining a portrait by Gainsborough.

(*G. R. Leslie, R.A.*)



Your equal and placid temper, your variety of conversation, your true politeness, by which you are so amiable in private society, and that enlarged hospitality which has long made your house a common centre of union for the great, the accomplished, the learned, and the ingenious ; all these qualities I can, in perfect confidence of not being accused of flattery, ascribe to you.

(*James Boswell, in his Dedication to Reynolds of the Life of Samuel Johnson*)



Here Reynolds is laid, and to tell you my mind,
He has not left a wiser or better behind ;
His pencil was striking, resistless and grand ;
His manners were gentle, complying and bland ;
Still born to improve us in every part,
His pencil our faces, his manners our heart :
To coxcombs averse, yet most civilly steering,
When they judged without skill he was still hard
of hearing :
When they talked of their Raphaels, Corregios
and stuff,
He shifted his trumpet and only took snuff.

(*Oliver Goldsmith*)

ARCHIBALD PHILIP PRIMROSE

5th Earl of Rosebery (1847-1929)

A thickset figure, a fine open countenance of rare distinction, with the shadow of sleeplessness about the eyes, and the noblest speaking voice heard in my time on the platform or in the senate—these were some of the physical attributes of the great Lord Rosebery. Wit and humour he had, too, abundantly, a manner of exquisite charm, and a gift, unequalled in these latter days, of rich and varied conversation. He seemed to know everything about many of the things that are worth knowing—literary and political history, books, pictures, old silver, old London—and he loved talking about them, without *dominating* as some other good talkers have done. How brilliantly he could write, everybody knows. A man of many and enviable talents and of notable achievements—who came in the end to be regarded as something of a failure!

One disabling weakness he had, a supersensitiveness to criticism. “That man would stab you in the back!” he would say, with surprising heat, of a hostile and perhaps negligible critic in the Press. Was it not a weakness, too, that he shrank almost prudishly, as one might say, from the rough and tumble business of political life? He was wont to speak with exaggerated horror of the sordid side of politics—its



EARL OF ROSEBERY

From a photograph by Gerrard, London

trampling ambitions, its overstatements, its platform promises destined never to be fulfilled. If it was a defect one admired him for it, even if it tended sometimes to keep him out of the active field when his presence was sorely needed.

His oratory is already becoming legendary. The present generation can know little or nothing of it. It was real oratory, the oratory of Fox, of Grattan and of Sheridan, not the orderly unimpassioned recital of a well prepared narrative. His eyes kindled, his face flushed, his voice trembled with emotion, in his more eloquent passages. I have seen him rouse an assembly of journalists—the coldest and least susceptible of audiences—to unrestrained enthusiasm by the passion of his appeal ; and who that has heard him on one of his great occasions in the House of Lords will ever forget the experience ? There is a dim religious light in that august chamber and a hush almost of the tomb. Their Lordships, subdued, as it would seem, by the influence of the place, speak generally in scarcely audible undertones and their “ cheers ” and “ ironical cheers ” are rarely more than polite murmurs of approval or dissent. Far otherwise was it when Lord Rosebery left the cross benches and, striding to the table, addressed the House in a voice that shook the rafters and set the painted windows tingling. Their Lordships would then stir themselves, hang on the words of the noble orator with animated attention, and cheer almost

as lustily as the Commoners in the other place at the other end of the corridor.

One speech at least of Lord Rosebery's made history. This was the famous Chesterfield speech. On a winter's day in 1901 Lord Rosebery went down to the little midland town and addressed a multitude in a vast railway shed. His most important theme was the South African war which was then dragging on and on, wearily, and as it seemed, interminably. The proposals he made for ending it are to be found in the history books. Suffice it to say here that his speech did in fact contribute measurably to its conclusion and to the establishment of an honourable and generous peace.

A failure ! Foreign Secretary, and a prudent and sagacious one ; Prime Minister ; litterateur of high accomplishment ; political orator, without compeer after Gladstone and Bright ; three times winner of the Derby ! If a failure, then only in the sense that his splendid gifts were equal to achievements more enduring and more dazzling still.

(C. H.)

SIR WALTER SCOTT (1771-1832)

On Friday last the poetically great Walter Scott came "like a sunbeam to my dwelling." The proudest boast of the Caledonian muse is tall, and rather robust than slender, but lame. . . . Neither the contour of his face nor yet his features are elegant ; his complexion healthy, and somewhat fair, without bloom. We find the singularity of brown hair and eyelashes, with flaxen eyebrows, and a countenance open, ingenuous and benevolent. . . . An upper lip too long prevents his mouth from being decidedly handsome, but the sweetest emanations of temper and heart play about it when he talks cheerfully and smiles ; and in company he is much oftener gay than contemplative. His conversation—an overflowing fountain of brilliant wit, apposite allusion, and playful archness—while on serious themes it is nervous and eloquent ; the accent decidedly Scotch, yet by no means broad. . . . The Stranger guest delighted us all by the unaffected charms of his mind and manners.

(*Miss Anna Seward, 1807*)



Scott is certainly the most wonderful writer of the day. . . . I like him, too, for his manliness of character, for the extreme pleasantness of his conversation, and his good nature to myself personally.

(*Lord Byron*)

When Sir Walter Scott dined at a gentleman's in London some time ago, all the servant maids in the house asked leave to stand in the passage to see him pass.

(*Lord Macaulay*)

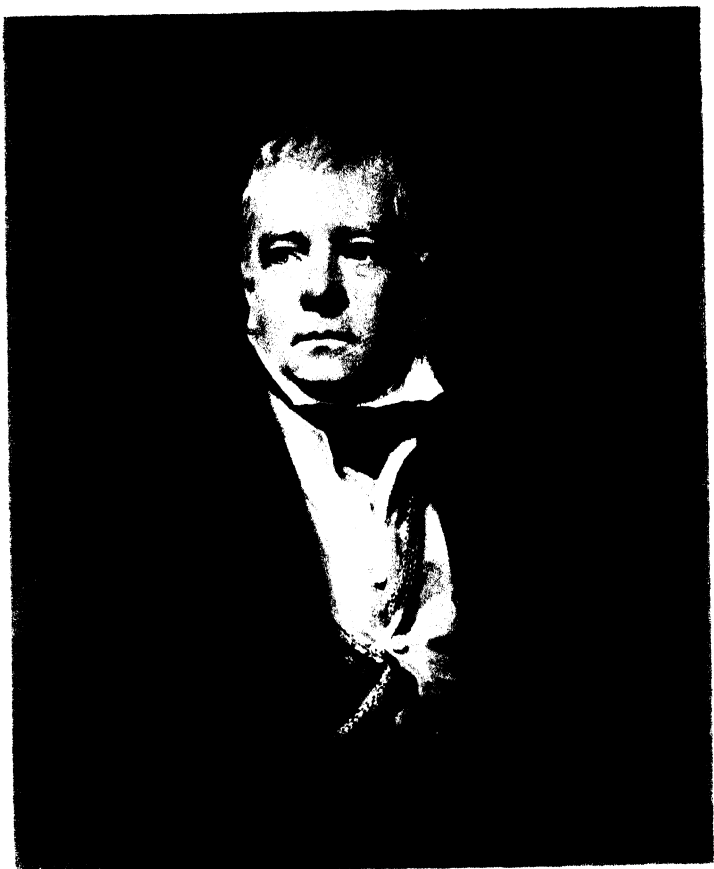


Scott's baronetcy was conferred on him, not in consequence of any Ministerial suggestion, but by the King [George IV] personally, and of his own unsolicited motion ; and when the Poet kissed his hand, he said to him—" I shall always reflect with pleasure on Sir Walter Scott's having been the first creation of my reign."



[In the summer of 1825 Sir Walter Scott visited Dublin.]

It would be endless to enumerate the distinguished persons who, morning after morning, crowded his *levée* in St. Stephen's Green. The courts of law were not then sitting, and most of the judges were out of town ; but all the other great functionaries, and the leading noblemen and gentlemen of the city and its neighbourhood, of whatever sect or party, hastened to tender every conceivable homage and hospitality. But all this was less surprising to the companions of his journey (though to say truth, we had, no more than himself, counted on such eager enthusiasm among any class of Irish society), than the demonstrations of respect which, after the first day or



SIR WALTER SCOTT

From the engraving by Walker, after Sir H. Raeburn

two, awaited him, wherever he moved, at the hands of the less elevated orders of the Dublin population. If his carriage was recognised at the door of any public establishment, the street was sure to be crowded before he came out again, so as to make his departure as slow as a procession. When he entered a street, the watchword was passed down both sides like lightning, and the shopkeepers and their wives stood bowing and curtsying all the way down ; while the mob and boys huzza'd as at the chariot wheels of a conqueror. I had certainly been most thoroughly unprepared for finding the common people of Dublin so alive to the claims of any non-military greatness. Sir Robert Peel says, that Sir Walter's reception on the High Street of Edinburgh, in August 1822, was the first thing that gave him a notion of " the electric shock of a nation's gratitude." I doubt if even that scene surpassed what I myself witnessed when he returned from Dame Street after inspecting the Castle of Dublin.

(*J. G. Lockhart*)



He [Charles Lamb] once saw him [Sir Walter Scott] in Fleet Street. A man, in the dress of a mechanic, stopped him just at Inner Temple gate, and said, touching his hat, " I beg pardon, Sir, but perhaps you would like to see Sir Walter Scott ; that is he just crossing the road ; " and Lamb stammered out his hearty thanks to his truly humane informer.

(*Sir T. N. Talfourd*)

I begin to tire of my gaities (in London) ; and the late hours and constant feasting disagree with me. I wish for a sheep's-head and whiskey-toddy against all the French cookery and champagne in the world.

(Sir Walter Scott, in his Diary, November 1826)

GEORGE SELWYN (1719-1791)

The character of Selwyn was in many respects a remarkable one. With brilliant wit, a quick perception of the ridiculous, and a thorough knowledge of the world and human nature, he united classical knowledge and a taste for the fine arts. To these qualities may be added others of a very contradictory nature. With a thorough enjoyment of the pleasures of society, an imperturbable good-humour, a kind heart, and a passionate fondness for children, he united a morbid interest in the details of human suffering, and, more especially, a taste for witnessing criminal executions. Not only was he a constant frequenter of such scenes of horror, but all the details of crime, the private history of the criminal, his demeanour at his trial, in the dungeon, and on the scaffold, and the state of his feelings in the hour of death and degradation, were to Selwyn matters of the deepest and most extraordinary interest. Even the most frightful particulars relating to suicide and murder; the investigation of the disfigured corpse, the sight of an acquaintance lying in his shroud, seem to have afforded him a painful and unaccountable pleasure. When the first Lord Holland was on his death-bed, he was told that Selwyn, who had long lived on terms of the closest intimacy with him, had called to enquire after his health. "The next time Mr. Selwyn calls," he said,

“ show him up : if I am alive I shall be delighted to see him, and if I am dead he will be glad to see me.”



Although Selwyn sat in the House of Commons for nearly half a century, it may readily be imagined that his talents were not of a nature to render him eminent as a debater. The only anecdote, indeed, which we possess of his conduct in Parliament was his habit of amusing the House, during a long debate, by snoring in unison with the first minister, Lord North. At the time when Burke was wearying his hearers by those long speeches, which obtained for him the name of the “ Dinnerbell,” a nobleman (who sat in the House of Commons with Selwyn) happened to be entering the House just as Selwyn was quitting it : “ Is the House up ? ” was the inquiry. “ No,” replied Selwyn, “ but Burke is.”

(J. H. Jesse)



Selwyn possessed infinite wit. He had indeed succeeded to Philip, Earl of Chesterfield's reputation for *bon-mots* ; most of which that then attained to any celebrity were either made by or attributed to him. Their effect, when falling from his lips, became greatly augmented by the listless and drowsy manner in which he uttered them, for he always seemed half asleep ; yet the promptitude of his replies was surprising.

(Sir N. W. Wraxall)

On the day of Selwyn's death Horace Walpole wrote to Miss Berry,—“ I am on the point of losing, or have lost, my oldest acquaintance and friend, George Selwyn, who was yesterday at the extremity. These misfortunes, though they can be so but for a short time, are very sensible to the old ; but him I really loved, not only for his infinite wit, but for a thousand good qualities.”

(Miss Berry)

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

(1792-1822)

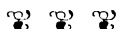
Shelley, when he died, was in his thirtieth year. His figure was tall and slight, and his constitution consumptive. He was subject to violent spasmodic pains, which would sometimes force him to lie on the ground till they were over ; but he had always a kind word to give to those about him, when his pangs allowed him to speak. In this organisation, as well as in some other respects, he resembled the German poet, Schiller. Though well-turned, his shoulders were bent a little, owing to premature thought and trouble. The same causes had touched his hair with gray ; and though his habits of temperance and exercise gave him a remarkable degree of strength, it is not supposed that he could have lived many years. He used to say that he had lived three times as long as the calendar gave out ; which he would prove, between jest and earnest, by some remarks on Time,

“ That would have puzzled that stout Stagyritye.”

Like the Stagyritye's, his voice was high and weak. His eyes were large and animated, with a dash of wildness in them ; his face small, but well shaped, particularly the mouth and chin, the turn of which was very sensitive and graceful. His complexion was naturally fair and delicate, with a colour in the cheeks. He had brown hair,

which, though tinged with gray, surmounted his face well, being in considerable quantity, and tending to a curl. His side-face, upon the whole, was deficient in strength, and his features would not have told well in a bust ; but when fronting and looking at you attentively his aspect had a certain seraphical character that would have suited a portrait of John the Baptist, or the angel whom Milton describes as holding a reed “ tipt with fire.” Nor would the most religious mind, had it known him, have objected to the comparison ; for, with all his scepticism, Shelley’s disposition was truly said to have been anything but irreligious.

(Leigh Hunt)



I went to Godwins. Mr. Shelley was there. I had never seen him before. His youth, and a resemblance to Southey, particularly in his voice, raised a pleasing impression, which was not altogether destroyed by his conversation, though it is vehement, and arrogant, and intolerant. He was very abusive towards Southey, whom he spoke of as having sold himself to the Court. And this he maintained with the usual party slang. His pension and his Laureatship, his early zeal and his recent virulence, are the proofs of gross corruption. . . . Shelley spoke of Wordsworth with less bitterness, with but an insinuation of his insincerity, etc.

(H. C. Robinson)

I was returning home one night to Hampstead after the opera. As I approached the door, I heard strange and alarming shrieks, mixed with the voice of a man. The next day it was reported by the gossips that Mr. Shelley, no Christian (for it was he who was there), had brought some "very strange female" into the house, no better, of course, than she ought to be. The real Christian had puzzled them. Shelley, in coming to our house that night, had found a woman lying near the top of the hill, in fits. It was a fierce winter night, with snow upon the ground ; and winter loses nothing of its fierceness at Hampstead. My friend, always the promptest as well as most pitying on these occasions, knocked at the first houses he could reach, in order to have the woman taken in. The invariable answer was, that they could not do it. He asked for an out-house to put her in, while he went for a doctor. Impossible ! In vain he assured them she was no impostor. They would not dispute the point with him ; but doors were closed, and windows were shut down. Had he lit upon worthy Mr. Park, the philologist, that gentleman would assuredly have come, in spite of his Calvinism. But he lived too far off. Had he lit upon my friend, Armitage Brown, who lived on another side of the Heath ; or on his friend and neighbour Dilke ; they would either of them have jumped up from amidst their books or their bed-clothes, and have gone out with him. But the paucity of Christians is astonishing, considering the number

of them. Time flies ; the poor woman is in convulsions ; her son, a young man, lamenting over her.

At last my friend sees a carriage driving up to a house at a little distance. The knock is given ; the warm door opens ; servants and lights pour forth. Now, thought he, is the time. He puts on his best address, which anybody might recognise for that of the highest gentleman as well as of an interesting individual, and plants himself in the way of an elderly person, who is stepping out of the carriage with his family. He tells his story. They only press on the faster. “ Will you go and see her ? ” “ No, sir ; there’s no necessity for that sort of thing, depend on it. Impostors swarm everywhere : the thing cannot be done ; sir, your conduct is extraordinary.” “ Sir,” cried Shelley, assuming a very different manner, and forcing the flourishing householder to stop out of astonishment, “ I am sorry to say that *your* conduct is *not* extraordinary ; and if my own seems to amaze you, I will tell you something which may amaze you a little more, and I hope will frighten you. It is such men as you who madden the spirits and the patience of the poor and wretched ; and if ever a convulsion comes in this country (which is very probable), recollect what I tell you : you will have your house, that you refuse to put the miserable woman into, burnt over your head.” “ God bless me, sir ! Dear me, sir ! ” exclaimed the poor, frightened man, and fluttered

into his mansion. The woman was then brought to our house, which was at some distance, and down a bleak path (it was in the Vale of Health) ; and Shelley and her son were obliged to hold her till the doctor could arrive. It appeared that she had been attending this son in London, on a criminal charge made against him, the agitation of which had thrown her into the fits on her return. The doctor said she would have perished, had she lain there a short time longer. The next day my friend sent mother and son comfortably home to Hendon, where they were known, and whence they returned him thanks full of gratitude.

(Leigh Hunt)



When one thinks of the early misery which he suffered, and of the insolent infidelity which, being yet so young, he wooed with a lover's passion, then the darkness of midnight begins to form a deep impenetrable background, upon which the phantasmagoria of all that is to come may arrange itself in troubled phosphoric streams and sweeping processions of woe. Yet again, when one recurs to his gracious nature, his fearlessness, his truth, his purity from all fleshliness of appetite, his freedom from vanity, his diffusive love and tenderness—suddenly out of the darkness reveals itself a morning of May, forests and thickets of rose advance to the foreground, and from the midst of them looks out “ the eternal

child," cleansed from his sorrow, radiant with joy, having power given him to forget the misery which he suffered, power given him to forget the misery which he caused, and leaning with his heart upon that dove-like faith against which his erring intellect had rebelled.

(Thomas De Quincey)

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

(1751-1816)

He was always heard [in the House of Commons], generally listened to with eagerness, and could obtain a hearing, at almost any hour. Burke, who wanted Sheridan's nice tact and his amenity of manner, was continually coughed down, and on those occasions he lost his temper. Even Fox often tired the House by the repetitions which he introduced into his speeches. Sheridan never abused their patience. Whenever he rose, they anticipated a rich repast of wit without acrimony, seasoned by allusions and citations the most delicate, yet obvious in their application.

At this period of his life, when he was not more than thirty-three years of age, his countenance and features had in them something peculiarly pleasing, indicative at once of intellect, humour, and gaiety. All these characteristics played about his lips when speaking, and operated with inconceivable attraction. . . . Even the tones of his voice, which were singularly mellifluous, aided the general effect of his eloquence ; nor was it accompanied by Burke's unpleasant Irish accent. . . . Sheridan won his way by a sort of fascination.

(*Sir N. W. Wraxall*)



Whatever Sheridan has done or chosen to do has been, *par excellence*, always the *best* of its

kind. He has written the *best* comedy (School for Scandal), the *best* opera (The Duenna—in my mind far before that St. Giles's lampoon, The Beggar's Opera), the *best* farce (The Critic—it is only too good for an after-piece), and the *best* Address (Monologue on Garrick),—and, to crown all, delivered the very *best* oration ever conceived or heard in this country.

(Lord Byron)



Of all the various species of oratory, of every kind of eloquence that had been heard, either in ancient or modern times ; whatever the acuteness of the bar, the dignity of the senate, or the morality of the pulpit could furnish, had not been equal to what that House had that day heard in Westminster Hall.

(Edmund Burke on Sheridan's speech on the Motion :
 "That Warren Hastings, Esquire, be impeached")



When Sheridan withdrew his wife from the musical profession, many persons censured his conduct on the ground of his having no property nor any profession by which he could support a wife and family. On the other hand, a few persons attempted his vindication, as being actuated by delicate feeling, and virtuous intrepidity. Among these was Dr. Johnson, of whose reasoning upon this occasion his biographer has

given the following statement, without mentioning the names of the parties, both of whom were living at the time of his publication. "We talked," says Boswell, "of a young gentleman's marriage with an eminent singer, and his determination that she should no longer sing in public, though his father was very earnest she should, because her talents would be liberally rewarded, so as to make her a good fortune. It was questioned whether the young gentleman who had not a shilling in the world, but was blest with very uncommon talents, was not foolishly delicate, or foolishly proud, and his father truly rational, without being mean. Johnson, with all the high spirit of a Roman Senator, exclaimed, "He resolved wisely and nobly, to be sure. He is a brave man. Would not a gentleman be disgraced by having his wife sing publicly for hire? No, Sir, there can be no doubt here. I know not if I should not *prepare* myself for a public singer, as readily as let my wife be one."

Mrs. Sheridan . . . earnestly entreated her husband to relax from his opposition, so far as to allow of her occasional performance, until their circumstances should render it unnecessary. But he still continued inflexible, though it was with great difficulty he could raise the necessary supplies for the ordinary purposes of life. . . . One of his resources was that of writing for the fugitive publications of the day, in which he was materially assisted by his wife; and many years after his entrance into the sphere of politics he

has been heard to say, "Mrs. Sheridan and myself were obliged to keep writing for our daily leg or shoulder of mutton, otherwise we should have had no dinner."

(*Sheridaniana*)



No one was so ready and cheerful in promoting the amusements of a country house ; and on a rural excursion he was always the soul of the party. His talent at dressing a little dish was often put in requisition on such occasions, and an Irish stew was that on which he particularly plumed himself. . . .

Being of so playful a disposition himself, it was not wonderful that he should take such pleasure in the society of children. I have been told, as doubly characteristic of him, that he has often, at Mr. Monckton's, kept a chaise and four waiting half the day for him at the door, while he romped with the children.

(*Thomas Moore*)



Poor dear Sherry ! I shall never forget the day he and Rogers and Moore and I passed together ; when *he* talked, and *we* listened, without one yawn, from six till one in the morning.

(*Lord Byron*)



. . . In the mean time, the clamours and incursions of creditors increased. A sheriff's officer at length arrested the dying man in his bed, and

was about to carry him off, in his blankets, to a spunging-house, when Dr. Bain interfered—and, by threatening the officer with the responsibility he must incur, if, as was too probable, his prisoner should expire on the way, averted this outrage.



. . . Seldom has there been such an array of rank as graced this funeral [Sheridan's, in Westminster Abbey]. The Pall-bearers were the Duke of Bedford, the Earl of Lauderdale, Earl Mulgrave, the Lord Bishop of London, Lord Holland, and Lord Spencer. Among the mourners were H.R.H. the Duke of York, H.R.H. the Duke of Sussex, the Duke of Argyle, the Marquises of Anglesea and Tavistock ; the Earls of Thanet, Harrington, Besborough, Mexborough, Rosslyn, and Yarmouth ; Lords George Cavendish and Robert Spencer ; Viscounts Sidmouth, Granville, and Duncannon ; Lords Rivers, Erskine, and Lynedoch ; the Lord Mayor ; Right Hon. G. Canning and W. W. Pole, &c. &c.

Where were they all, these Royal and Noble persons, who now crowded to “ partake the gale ” of Sheridan's glory ; Where were they all, while any life remained in him ? Where were they all, but a few weeks before, when their interposition might have saved his heart from breaking,—or when the zeal, now wasted on the grave, might have soothed and comforted the death-bed ?

(Thomas Moore)



MRS. SIDDONS

From the engraving published by Henry Graves & Co.,
after Sir Thomas Gainsborough

MRS. SIDDONS (1755-1831)

The magical tones, and the marvellous eye,
and the majestic figure of Mrs. Siddons.

(*H. C. Robinson*)



Mr. Rogers and Mr. Sheridan were conversing on the actors. "Your admiration of Mrs. Siddons is so high," said Rogers, "that I wonder you never made open love to her." "To her," said Sheridan; "to that magnificent and appalling creature; I should as soon have thought of making love to the Archbishop of Canterbury."

(*Sheridaniana*)



Sir Joshua paid her a fine compliment. He never marked his own name (on a picture) except in the instance of Mrs. Siddons's portrait as the Tragic Muse, when he wrote his name on the hem of her garment. "I could not lose," he said, "the honour this opportunity offered to me for my name going down to posterity on the hem of your garment."

(*James Northcote, R.A.*)



I was in the grand gallery of the Louvre when I heard someone say "Mrs. Siddons is below." I instantly left the Raphaels and Titians, and went in search of her, and my Journal says: "I am almost ashamed to confess that the sight of her gave me a delight beyond almost any I have received in Paris." I had never seen her so near. She was walking with Horace Twiss's

mother. I kept as near her as I could with decorum, and without appearing to be watching her ; yet there was something about her that disturbed. So glorious a head ought not to have been covered with a small chip hat. She knit her brows, too, on looking at the pictures, as if to assist a failing sight. But I recognized her fascinating smile with delight.

(*H. C. Robinson*)



What a face she had ! The gods do not bestow such a face as Mrs. Siddons' on the stage more than once in a century. I knew her very well, and she had the good taste to laugh heartily at my jokes ; she was an excellent person, but she was not remarkable out of her profession, and never got out of tragedy even in common life. She used to *stab* the potatoes ; and said, " Boy, give me a knife ! " as she would have said, " Give me the dagger ! "

(*Sydney Smith*)



Neither praise nor money, the two powerful corrupters of mankind, seem to have deprived her.

(*Dr. Johnson*)



June 9th, 1831.—Mrs. Siddons died this morning—the greatest, grandest genius that ever was born ! Peace to her immortal shade ! She was good, and pious, and an affectionate mother. Posterity can never properly estimate her power, any more than we can estimate Garrick's.

(*B. R. Haydon*)

LAURENCE STERNE (1713-1768)

I . . . cannot omit mentioning this anecdote of myself, and schoolmaster. He had had the ceiling of the school-room new white-washed—the ladder remaining there—I one unlucky day mounted it, and wrote with a brush in large capital letters

LAU. STERNE,

for which the usher severely whipped me. My master was very much hurt at this, and said, before me, that never should that name be effaced, for I was a boy of genius, and he was sure I should come to preferment—this expression made me forget the stripes I had received.

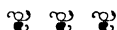
(Sterne, in his "Memoirs")



At present [April 1760], nothing is talked of, nothing admired, but what I cannot help calling a very insipid and tedious performance : it is a kind of novel, called *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* ; the humour of which consists in the whole narration always going backwards. I can conceive a man saying that it would be droll to write a book in that manner, but have no notion of his persevering in executing it. It makes one smile two or three times at the beginning, but in recompense makes one yawn for two hours. The characters are tolerably kept up, but

the humour is for ever attempted and missed. The best thing in it is a sermon oddly coupled with a good deal of bawdy, and both the composition of a clergyman. The man's head, indeed, was a little turned before, now topsy-turvy with his success and fame. Dodsley has given him six hundred and fifty pounds for the second edition and two more volumes (which I suppose will reach backwards to his great-great-grandfather); Lord Fauconberg, a donative of one hundred and sixty pounds a year; and Bishop Warburton gave him a purse of gold and this compliment (which happened to be a contradiction) "that it was quite an original composition, and in the true Cervantic vein." . . . Not content with this [he] recommended the book to the bench of bishops, and told them Mr. Sterne, the author, was the English Rabelais. They had never heard of such a writer.

(*Horace Walpole*)



Tristram Shandy is still a greater object of admiration, the man as well as the book. One is invited to dinner where he dines a fortnight beforehand.

(*Thomas Gray*)



It having been observed that there was little hospitality in London; JOHNSON: "Nay, Sir, any man who has a name, or who has the power

of pleasing, will be very generally invited in London. The man, Sterne, I have been told, has had engagements for three months." GOLD-SMITH : " And a very dull fellow." JOHNSON : " Why, no, Sir."

(James Boswell)



He was sitting in a coffee-house at York, when a stranger came in, who gave much offence to the company by descanting very freely upon religion and the hypocrisy of the clergy. The young fellow at length addressed himself to Sterne, and asked him what were his sentiments upon the subject. Sterne, instead of answering him directly, told the witling that his dog was reckoned one of the most beautiful pointers in the whole country, was very good natured, but had an infernal trick which destroyed all his good qualities. " He never sees a clergyman," continued Sterne, " but he immediately flies at him." " How long may he have had that trick, Sir ? " " Ever since he was a puppy." The young man felt the keenness of the satire, turned upon his heel, and left Sterne to enjoy his triumph.

(Anon.)



As Sterne advanced in literary fame, he left his livings to the care of his curates ; and although he acquired a good deal of money by his productions, yet his savings were no greater at the

end of the year than when he had no other support but the single vicarage of Sutton. Indeed his travelling expenses abroad, and the luxurious manner in which he lived with the gay and polite at home, wholly dissipated his means. He died as he lived. A day or two before, he seemed not in the least affected by the prospect of his approaching dissolution. He was buried privately in the burying-ground belonging to the Parish of St. George's, Hanover Square, attended only by two gentlemen in a mourning coach. His death was announced in the newspapers of March 22nd, 1768, by the following paragraph :—

“ Died at his lodgings in Bond Street, the Rev. Mr. Sterne. Alas poor Yorick ! I knew him well ; a fellow of infinite jest, most excellent fancy, etc.

Wit, humour, genius, hadst thou, all agree ;
One grain of wisdom had been worth the
three ! ”

(*G. G. Cunningham*)

DEAN SWIFT (1667-1745)

He has very particular eyes ; they are quite azure as the heavens, and there's a very uncommon archness in them.

(*A. Pope*)



The more I read your works, the more ashamed I am of mine.

(*Voltaire, to Swift*)



Mr. Secretary [St. John] had too much company with him to-day ; so I came away soon after dinner. I give no man liberty to swear or talk bawdy, and I found some of them were in constraint, so I left them to themselves.



I was at court and church to-day [at Windsor], as I was this day Se'en night ; I generally am acquainted with about thirty in the drawing room, and am so proud I make all the lords come up to me ; one passes half an hour pleasant enough. We had a dunce to preach before the queen to-day, which often happens. Windsor is a delicious situation, but the town is scoundrel.

(*Swift, to Stella*)



You are to understand that I live in the corner of a vast unfurnished house : my family consists of a steward, a groom, a helper in the stable, a

footman, and an old maid, who are all at board-wages, and when I do not dine abroad, or make an entertainment (which last is very rare), I eat a mutton pie, and drink half a pint of wine : my amusements are defending my small dominions against the archbishop, and endeavouring to reduce my rebellious choir.

*(Swift, to Pope, from the
Deanery of St. Patrick's, 1715)*



The Dean of St. Patrick's sitting like a toad in a corner of his great house, with a perfect hatred of all public actions and persons.

(Swift, from the same, to Dr. Stopford, 1725)



You think, as I ought to think, that it is time for me to have done with the world ; and so I would, if I could get into a better, before I was called into the best, and not die here in a rage, like a poisoned rat in a hole.

(Swift, from the same, to Bolingbroke, 1728-9)



Every man you know or care for here, inquires of you, and pays you the only devoir he can, that of drinking your health. I wish you had any motive to see this kingdom. I could keep you, for I am rich ; that is, I have more than I want. I can afford room for yourself and two servants ; I have indeed room enough ; nothing

but myself at home ; . . . yet my house is enlarged and the gardens extend and flourish. . . . I have more fruit-trees and kitchen garden than you have any thought of ; nay I have good melons and pine apples of my own growth. I am as much a better gardener, as I am a worse poet, than when you saw me ; but gardening is near akin to philosophy, for Tully says, *agricultura proxima sapientiæ*. For God's sake, why should not you (that are a step higher than a philosopher, a divine, yet have more grace and wit than to be a bishop) even give all you have to the poor of Ireland, (for whom you have already done everything else), so quit the place, and live and die with me ?

(Pope, to Swift, 1736)



It was known by an accident, after Dean Swift's memory failed, that he allowed an annuity of fifty-two pounds to Mrs. Dingley [Stella's companion] ; but, instead of doing this with the pride of a benefactor, or gratifying his pride by making her feel her dependence, he always pretended that he acted as her agent, and that the money he paid her was the produce of a certain sum which she had in the funds ; and the better to save appearances, he always took her receipt, and sometimes would pretend, with great seeming vexation, that she drew upon him before he had received her money from London.

(Sir Walter Scott)

ALFRED 1st Lord Tennyson

(1809–1892)

Mr. Tennyson is a fit person to be Poet Laureate.

(Lord John Russell, to the Prince Consort, 1850)



The large dark eyes, generally dreamy but with an occasional gleam of imaginative alertness, the dusky, almost Spanish complexion, the high built head and the massive abundance of curling hair like the finest and blackest silk, are still before me, and no less the stalwart form.

(Aubrey de Vere)



... One of the finest looking men in the world. A great shock of rough dusky dark hair ; bright, laughing, hazel eyes ; massive aquiline face, most massive yet most delicate ; sallow brown complexion, almost Indian looking. Clothes cynically loose, free-and-easy, smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical, metallic, fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between ; speech and speculation free and plenteous ; I do not meet in these late decades such company over a pipe.

(Thomas Carlyle)

We have had Alfred Tennyson here, very droll and very wayward : and much sitting up of nights till two and three in the morning, with pipes in our mouths : at which good hour we would get Alfred to give us some of his magic music, which he does between growling and smoking ; and so to bed.

(Edward Fitzgerald)



In Poetry—illustrious and consummate ;
In friendship—noble and sincere

(Robert Browning)

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

(1811-1863)

He [Thackeray] has the appearance of a colossal infant, smooth, white, shiny ringlety hair, flaxen, alas, with advancing years, a roundish face, with a little dab of a nose upon which it is a perpetual wonder how he keeps his spectacles, a sweet rather piping voice, with something of the childish treble about it, and a very tall, slightly stooping figure—such are the characteristics of the great “Snob” of England. His manner is like that of everybody else in England—nothing original, all planed down into perfect uniformity with that of his fellow creatures. There was not much more distinction in his talk than in his white choker or black coat and waistcoat.

(*J. L. Motley*)



His appearance has often been described, and, although he was then unknown to me, it at once commanded my attention—tall above the ordinary height and proportionately broad. His face had been disfigured by a blow received in boyhood, and in repose would have been called plain. Although characterized by great solidity, it was only when he lifted his eyes that it became illumined, and the observer felt that it was one of rare intelligence. . . . Although not amongst

his intimate friends, I met him frequently. We were members together of the Garrick Club, and I often saw him elsewhere.

I never thought him an agreeable companion. He was very egotistical, greedy of flattery, and sensitive of criticism to a ridiculous extent. He may have possessed great powers of conversation, but did not exhibit them when I had an opportunity of judging. I ought to mention . . . that among those who knew him well, and to whom he extended his confidence and friendship, he was most enthusiastically beloved.

(Sergeant Ballantine)

*JOSEPH MALLORD WILLIAM
TURNER, R.A. (1775-1851)*

... His less enthusiastic friends describe him as having a red Jewish face with staring bluish-grey eyes, and the smallest and dirtiest hands on record. His complexion was very coarse and weather-beaten; his cuticle that of a stage-coachman or an old man-of-war boatswain. It was as tough as the skin of a rhinoceros, and red as the shell of a boiled lobster. That complexion told of rough days, when the rain had driven in his eyes as he sat on diligence roofs, or in boats lifting over enormous waves. The sea wind had buffeted him; the hot Italian sun had parched and browned him. His dress was always careless and often dirty; and his sleeves were long, so as to hide his small, pliable hands. Latterly he improved in his costume, thanks to the care of his Chelsea housekeeper, and even was resplendent at Academy meetings in a red velvet waistcoat.



Just about the time (1843) when Mr. Ruskin had been heralding Turner as the apostle of Nature the latter was seen on a Margate steamer, eating shrimps out of an immense red silk handkerchief laid across his knees. "An apostle, surely," exclaimed a bystander, "in the strangest guise."

In summer he often went to Margate on Saturday morning by the "Magnet" or "King William" steamer. Most of the time he hung over the stern, watching the effects of the sun and the boiling of the foam; but about two o'clock he would open his wallet of cold meat in the cabin, and, approaching anyone with whom he was in the habit of chatting, would beg a clean plate and a hot potato; nor was he above accepting one glass of wine. He would not, however, take a second. It need hardly be added that he was no favourite with the waiters.



When his picture of "Cologne" was exhibited in the year 1826, it was hung between two portraits, by Sir Thomas Lawrence, of Lady Wallscourt and Lady Robert Manners. The sky of Turner's picture being exceedingly bright, it had a most injurious effect on the colour of the two portraits, and Lawrence naturally felt mortified, and openly complained of the position. Artists at that time, it should be added, were permitted to retouch their pictures on the walls of the Academy. At a private view on the morning of the opening of the Exhibition, a friend of Turner's who had seen the "Cologne" in all its splendour led a group of expectant critics up to it. He started back from it in consternation. The golden sky had changed to a dun colour. He ran up to the artist, who was in another part

of the room. "Turner, Turner, what have you been doing to your picture?" "Oh!" muttered Turner, in a low voice; "poor Lawrence was so unhappy! It's only lampblack. It'll all wash off after the Exhibition!" He had actually passed a wash of lampblack in water colour over the sky, and utterly spoiled his picture for the time; and so he let it remain through the Exhibition to gratify Lawrence.

(Walter Thornbury)



Strange as it may sound, it is absolutely true that I have heard Turner ridicule some of his own later works quite as skilfully as the newspapers did. For example, at a dinner when I was present, a salad was offered to Turner, who called the attention of his neighbour at the table (James Lloyd, afterwards Lord Overstone) to it in the following words: "Nice cool green that lettuce, isn't it? and the beetroot pretty red—not quite strong enough; and the mixture, delicate tint of yellow that. Add some mustard, and then you will have one of my pictures."



Turner . . . detested dealers; he would have none of them. A story is told of one well known picture merchant, who was determined—though he was aware of Turner's dislike to the fraternity—to see the famous gallery in Queen Anne

Street. Forgetting—or perhaps not knowing—that his card must be given to the servant before admission could be obtained, or believing, possibly, that the maid merely took it as a matter of form, he was proceeding leisurely upstairs into the gallery, when he found himself pulled backwards by his coat tails, and looking round saw the irate face of the great artist ; who, without a word, pointed to the front-door, through which the dealer made an ignominious retreat.

(*W. P. Frith, R.A.*)



In that region of dull and decorous streets which radiates to the north and west from Cavendish Square, Queen Anne Street is one of the dullest and dingiest ; and of that dreary Queen Anne Street the dreariest house any thirty years before 1851 was No. 47. Judging from its weather-stained and soot-grimed walls, its patched windows dark with dust and foul with cobwebs, its woodwork unfreshened by paint, its chimneys from which curled no smoke, its unsound threshold, it might have been in Chancery, it might have been haunted, it might have been the scene of a murder. Yet it was not uninhabited. Not unfrequently a visitor might be seen to knock, and, after long waiting, the door would be half-opened by a withered and sluttish old woman, or, before 1830, by a little, shabby, lean old man. Nay, repulsive as the house might be, and grim as might be its

guardians, carriages would sometimes be seen drawn up before its door for hours, while their gay and elegant freight found occupation inside.

. . . In that desolate house—47 Queen Anne Street, West—from 1812 to 1851, lived Joseph Mallord William Turner, the greatest landscape painter of the English school. Hanging along a bare and chilly gallery on the first floor of that gloomy house, stacked against the walls, rolled up in dark closets, flung aside into damp cellars, the rain streaming down the canvasses from the warped sashes and paper-patched frames of the ill-fitting skylights, were collected some of the noblest landscapes that were ever painted, while piles of drawings even more masterly, and reams of sketches, the rudiments and first thoughts of finished works, were piled away in portfolios, and presses, and boxes, in every nook and corner of the dark and dusty dwelling. Notes for hundreds, cheques for thousands, had been offered again and again in that gallery to the painter of these pictures. He was said to adore money, and yet he refused both notes and cheques—scornfully often, sometimes regretfully and as if by an effort, but always persistingly. Dealers wondered ; patrons were in despair ; artists scoffed, or sneered, or doubted. “ Turner was mad ; he meant to be buried with his ‘ Carthage ’ for a winding sheet.”

(“ *The Times*,” 10th November, 1856)

HORACE WALPOLE

4th Earl of Orford (1717-1797)

His figure . . . was not merely tall, but more properly *long* and slender to excess ; his complexion and particularly his hands, of a most unhealthy paleness. . . . His eyes were remarkably bright and penetrating, very dark and lively : —his voice was not strong, but his tones were extremely pleasant, and if I may so say, highly gentlemanly. I do not remember his common gait ; he always entered a room in that style of affected delicacy, which fashion had made almost natural ; *chapeau bras* between his hands as if he wished to compress it, or under his arm—knees bent, and feet on tip-toe, as if afraid of a wet floor. His dress in visiting was most usually, in summer when I most saw him, a lavender suit, the waistcoat embroidered with a little silver or of white silk worked in the tambour, partridge silk stockings, and gold buckles ; ruffles and frill generally lace. I remember when a child, thinking him very much underdressed if at any time except in mourning, he wore hemmed cambric. In summer no powder, but his wig combed straight, and showing his very smooth pale forehead, and queued behind : in winter powder.

(Miss L. M. Hawkins)



He had a fund of anecdote that could provide food for conversation without any assistance from

the news of the day, or the state of the elements. . . . He was scrupulously, and even elaborately well-bred ; fearing, perhaps, from his conscious turn to sarcasm, that if he suffered himself to be unguarded, he might utter expressions more amusing to be recounted aside, than agreeable to be received in front.

(Fanny Burney)

ARTHUR WELLESLEY

1st Duke of Wellington (1769-1852)

He looked like an eagle of the gods who had put on human shape, and had got silvery with age and service.

(B. R. Haydon)



It was my good fortune to meet with Lord Wellington, the greatest man in his day, at dinner, the very first day. He is no other than a Bonaparte, so strong a likeness, but with better colour ; and more animation and merriment I never saw. He has none of the airs of a great man at the head of 100,000 men—all life and good humour.

(Sir William Gall, from Lisbon, 1810)



Our last entertainment here was a concert in the public and fine room appropriated for music or dancing. The celebrated Madame Catalini had a benefit, at which the Queen of the Netherlands was present, not, however, in state, though not incognita ; and the king of warriors, Marshal Lord Wellington, surrounded by his staff and all the officers and persons here, whether Belgians, Prussians, Hanoverians, or English. I looked at Lord Wellington watchfully, and was charmed with every turn of his countenance, with his noble

and singular physiognomy and his eagle eye. He was gay even to sportiveness all the evening, conversing with the officers around him. He never was seated, not even a moment, though I saw seats vacated to offer him frequently. He seemed enthusiastically charmed with Catalini, ardently applauding whatsoever she sung, except the *Rule Britannia*; and to this with sagacious reserve, he listened in utter silence. Who ordered it I know not, but he felt it was injudicious in every country but our own to give out a chorus of "*Rule Britannia! Britannia rules the Waves!*"

And when an encore began to be vociferated from his officers, he instantly crushed it by a commanding air of disapprobation, and this offered me an opportunity of seeing how magnificently he could quit his convivial familiarity for imperious dominion when occasion might call for the transformation.

(Fanny Burney, from Brussels, 1815)



Rich in saving common-sense,
And, as the greatest only are,
In his simplicity sublime.

(Tennyson)



The Duke told me at dinner that Buonaparte would never do justice to Marmont, or pardon

his defeat, till he saw his [Duke of Wellington's] account of the action in which he had beaten Marmont. . . . The Duke added, that Buonaparte had always waited for, and depended on, his accounts of the actions in which he was engaged with the French, to judge of his general's conduct, and seemed proud, as well he might, of such a decisive proof of confidence in his truth and honour. . . . In answer to a number of women's questions . . . as to what degree of exultation he felt at the victory [of Waterloo] when won, and of grief and feeling at the moment for the fall of friends, he replied, with his usual natural unaffected simple manner, he had little time to feel either till long after all was over.

(*Miss Berry*)



Nov. 14th, 1826.—Dined at Croker's at Kensington, with his family, the Speaker, and the facetious Theodore Hook. We came away rather early that Anne [Sir Walter's daughter] and I might visit Mrs. Arbuthnot to meet the Duke of Wellington. In all my life I never saw him better. He has a dozen of campaigns in his body—and tough ones. Anne was delighted with the frank manners of this unequalled pride of British war, and he received me with all his usual kindness. He talked away about Buonaparte, Russia, and France.

(*Sir Walter Scott*)

Thy calm mien
Recalls old Rome, as much as thy high deed ;
Duty their only idol, and serene
When all are troubled ; in the utmost need
Prescient ; thy country's servant ever seen,
Yet sovereign of thyself, whate'er may speed.

(*Earl of Beaconsfield*)



Sunday, 13th October, 1839.—I found the Duke on the leads [of Walmer Castle]. After breakfast Mr. Arbuthnot told me to go to the village church and ask for the Duke's pew. I walked, and was shown into a large pew near the pulpit.

A few moments after the service had begun, the Duke and Mr. Arbuthnot came up—no pomp, no servants in livery with a pile of books. The Duke came into the presence of his Maker without cant, without affectation, a simple human being.

From the bare wainscot, the absence of curtains, the dirty green footstools, and common chairs, I feared I was in the wrong pew, and very quietly sat myself down in the Duke's place. Mr. Arbuthnot squeezed my arm before it was too late, and I crossed in an instant. The Duke pulled out his prayer-book, and followed the clergyman in the simplest way. I got deeply affected. Here was the greatest hero in the world, who had conquered the greatest genius, prostrating his heart and being before his God in his

venerable age, and praying for his mercy. However high his destiny above my own, here we were at least equal before our Creator. Here we were stripped of extrinsic distinctions ; and I looked at this wonderful man with an interest and feeling that touched my imagination beyond belief. The silence and embosomed solitude of the village church, the simplicity of its architecture, rather deepened than decreased the depth of my sensibilities. At the name of Jesus Christ the Duke bowed his silvery hairs like the humblest labourer, and yet not more than others, but to the same degree. He seemed to wish for no distinction. At the epistle he stood upright, like a soldier, and when the blessing was pronounced, he buried his head in one hand and uttered his prayer as if it came from his heart in humbleness.

Arthur Wellesley in the village church of Walmer this day was more interesting to me than at the last charge of the Guards at Waterloo, or in all the glory and paraphernalia of his entry into Paris.

(*B. R. Haydon*)



He was the GREATEST man this country ever produced, and the most *devoted* and *loyal* subject, and the staunchest supporter the Crown ever had.

(*Queen Victoria, 1852*)

JOHN WESLEY (1703-1791)

His manners were almost irresistibly winning, and his cheerfulness was like perpetual sunshine.



When you met him in the street of a crowded city, he attracted notice, not only by his band and cassock, and his long hair white and bright as silver, but by his pace and manner, both indicating that all his minutes were numbered, and that not one was to be lost.

(Robert Southey)



Wesley is a lean elderly man, fresh-coloured, his hair smoothly combed, but with a soupcon of curl at the ends. Wondrous clean, but as evident an actor as Garrick. He spoke his sermon, but so fast, and with so little accent, that I am sure he often uttered it. There were parts and eloquence in it ; but towards the end he exalted his voice, and acted very ugly enthusiasm.

(Horace Walpole, 1766)



John Wesley's conversation is good, but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at

a certain hour. This is very disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have his talk out as I do.

(*Dr. Johnson*)



Sat., 28th May, 1788.—I this day enter on my eighty-fifth year : and what cause have I to praise God, as for a thousand spiritual blessings, so for bodily blessings also ! How little have I suffered yet, by “ the rush of numerous years ! ” It is true, I am not so agile as I was in times past, I do not run or walk so fast as I did ; my sight is a little decayed. . . . I find likewise some decay in my memory, with regard to names, and things lately past ; but not at all with regard to what I have read or heard, twenty, forty, or sixty years ago ; neither do I find any decay in my hearing, smell, taste, or appetite (though I want but the third part of the food I did once ;) nor do I feel any such thing as weariness, either in travelling or preaching.

To what cause can I impute this, that I am as I am ? First, doubtless, to the power of God, fitting me for the work to which I am called, as long as He pleases to continue me therein, and, next, subordinately to this, to the prayers of his children.

May we not impute it, as inferior means,

1. To my constant exercise and change of air ?

2. To my never having lost a night’s sleep, sick or well, at land or at sea, since I was born ?

3. To my having sleep at command, so that, whenever I feel myself about worn out, I call it, and it comes, day or night ?

4. To my having constantly, for about sixty years, risen at four in the morning ?

5. To my constant preaching at five in the morning, for about fifty years ?

6. To my having had so little pain in my life ; so little sorrow, or anxious care ?

(John Wesley, in his Journal)



JOHN WILKES
From an engraving

JOHN WILKES (1727-1797)

I scarce ever met a better companion ; he has inexhaustible spirits, infinite wit and humour, and a great deal of knowledge : but a thorough profligate as well in principle as in practice ; his character is infamous, his life stained with every vice, and his conversation full of blasphemy and bawdy.

(Edward Gibbon)



Jack [Wilkes] has a great variety of talk, Jack is a scholar, and Jack has the manners of a gentleman.

(Dr. Johnson)



He was an incomparable comedian in all he said or did, and he seemed to consider human life itself as a mere comedy. In the House of Commons he was no less an actor than at the Mansion House or at Guildhall. [Wilkes had been Lord Mayor of London.] His speeches were full of wit, pleasantry, and point, yet nervous, spirited and not at all defective in argument. . . . In private society, particularly at table, he was pre-eminently agreeable, abounding in anecdote, ever gay and convivial, converting his very defects of person, manner or enunciation to purposes of merriment or of entertainment. If any man ever was pleasing who squinted, who

had lost his teeth, and lisped, Wilkes might be so esteemed. His powers of conversation survived his other faculties. I have dined in company with him not long before his decease, when he was extenuated and enfeebled to a great degree, but his tongue retained all its former activity, and seemed to have outlived his other organs. Even in corporeal ruin, and obviously approaching the termination of his career, he formed the charm of the assembly. His celebrity, his courage, his imprisonment, his outlawry, his duels, his intrepid resistance to ministerial and royal persecution, his writings, his adventures, lastly his triumph and serene evening of life . . . these circumstances combined in his person rendered him the most interesting individual of the age in which he lived.

(Sir N. W. Wraxall)



The King himself [George III] owned that he had never seen so well-bred a Lord Mayor.

(Horace Walpole)

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

(1770-1850)

I have a vivid recollection of Wordsworth, who was a very grave man, with strong features and a deep voice. I met him first at the chambers (they were in the Temple) of Mr. Henry Crabb Robinson, one of the most amiable of men. I was a young versifier, and Wordsworth was just emerging out of a cloud of ignorant contumely into the sunrise of his fame. He was fond (perhaps too fond) of reciting his own poetry, before friends and strangers. I was not attracted by his manner, which was almost too solemn, but I was deeply impressed by some of the weighty notes in his voice, when he was delivering out his oracles. I forget whether it was "Dion" or the beautiful poem of "Laodamia" that he read; but I remember the reading long afterwards, as one recollects the roll of the spent thunder.

(*B. W. Procter*)



On the 28th August [1833], I went to Rydal Mount, to pay my respects to Mr. Wordsworth. His daughters called in their father, a plain, elderly, white-haired man, not prepossessing, and disfigured by green goggles. He sat down and talked with great simplicity. . . . To judge from a single conversation, he made the impression of a narrow and very English mind; of one who

paid for his rare elevation by general tameness and conformity. Off his own beat, his opinions were of no value.

(R. W. Emerson)



He was, upon the whole, not a well-made man. His legs were pointedly condemned by all female connoisseurs in legs ; not that they were bad in any way which *would* force itself upon your notice—there was no absolute deformity about them ; and undoubtedly they had been serviceable legs beyond the average standard of human requisition ; for I calculate, upon good data, that with these identical legs Wordsworth must have traversed a distance of 175,000 to 180,000 English miles—a mode of exertion which, to him, stood in the stead of alcohol and all other stimulants whatsoever to the animal spirits ; to which, indeed, he was indebted for a life of unclouded happiness, and we for much of what is most excellent in his writings.

(Thomas De Quincey)



April 13th, 1815.—I . . . sauntered along with him to West-end Lane, and so on to Hampstead, with great delight. Never did any man so beguile the time as Wordsworth. His purity of heart, his kindness, his soundness of principle, his information, his knowledge, and the intense and eager feelings with which he pours forth all he knows,

affect, interest, and enchant me. I do not know any one I would be so inclined to worship as a purified being.

(B. R. Haydon)



At Ambleside, in March 1848, I was for a couple of days the guest of Miss Martineau, then newly returned from Egyptian tour. On Sunday afternoon I accompanied her to Rydal Mount. And as I have recorded a visit to Wordsworth, many years before, I must not forget this second interview. We found Mr. Wordsworth asleep on the sofa. He was at first silent and indisposed, as an old man, suddenly waked, before he had ended his nap ; but soon became full of talk on the French news. He was nationally bitter on the French : bitter on Scotchmen too. No Scotchman, he said, can write English. . . . His opinions of French, English, Irish and Scotch seemed rashly *formulized* from little anecdotes of what had befallen himself and members of his family, in a diligence or stage coach. His face sometimes lighted up, but his conversation was not marked by special force or elevation. . . . He had a healthy look, with a weather-beaten face, his face corrugated, especially the large nose.

Miss Martineau, who lived near him, praised him to me, not for his poetry, but for thrift and economy ; for having afforded to his country neighbors an example of a modest household, where comfort and culture were secured without

any display. She said, that, in his early house-keeping at the cottage where he first lived, he was accustomed to offer his friends bread and plainest fare : if they wanted anything more they must pay him for their board. It was the rule of the house. I replied, that it evinced English pluck more than any anecdote I knew. A gentleman in the neighborhood told the story of Walter Scott's once staying a week with Wordsworth, and slipping out every day under pretence of a walk, to the Swan Inn, for a cold cut and porter ; and one day, passing with Wordsworth the inn, he was betrayed by the landlord's asking him if he had come for his porter.

(*R. W. Emerson*)

SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN

(1632-1723)

That rare and early prodigy of universal science, Dr. Chr. Wren.

(*John Evelyn*)



As to his bodily constitution, it was naturally rather delicate than strong, especially in his youth, which seemed consumptive ; and yet, by a judicious regularity and temperance, (having acquired good knowledge in physic) he continued healthy, with little intermission, even to his extreme old age (ninety-one years). Further 'tis observable, that he was happily endued with such an evenness of temper, a steady tranquillity of mind, and Christian fortitude, that no injurious incidents, or inquietudes of human life, could ever ruffle or discompose ; and was in practice a Stoic.



The Surveyor's [i.e. Wren's] salary for building St. Paul's from the foundation to the finishing thereof (as appears from the public accounts) was not more than £200 per annum. This, in truth, was his own choice, but what the rest of the Commissioners, on the commencement of the work, judged unreasonably small, considering the extensive charge ; the pains and skill in the

contrivance ; in preparing draughts, models, and instructions for the artificers, in their several stations and allotments ; in almost daily over-seeing and directing in person ; in making estimates and contracts ; in examining and adjusting all bills and accounts etc. Nevertheless, he was content with this small allowance, nor coveted any additional profit, always preferring the public service to any private ends.

(Parentalia)

A DINNER OF POETS

[Charles Lamb's "noble-hearted Monkhouse" would have been gratified, we may be sure, if he had known that records of his little dinner-party were to be handed down to posterity by three of his guests.]

April, 24th, 1823.—Dined at Mr. Monkhouse's . . . on Wordsworth's invitation, who lives there whenever he comes to town. A singular party. Coleridge, Rogers, Wordsworth and his wife, Charles Lamb (the hero at present of the *London Magazine*) and his sister, the poor woman who went mad in a diligence on the way to Paris [*sic*], and a Mr. Robinson, one of the *minora sidera* of this constellation of the Lakes; the host himself, a Maecenas of the school, contributing nothing but good dinners and silence. Charles Lamb, a clever fellow, certainly, but full of villainous and abortive puns, which he miscarries of every minute. Some excellent things, however, have come from him.

(*Thomas Moore*)



April 24th, 1823.—Dined at Monkhouse's. Our party consisted of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, Moore, and Rogers. Five poets of very unequal worth and most disproportionate popularity, whom the public probably would arrange in a different order. During this afternoon, Coleridge alone displayed any of his peculiar

talent. I have not for years seen him in such excellent health and with so fine a flow of spirits. His discourse was addressed chiefly to Wordsworth, on points of metaphysical criticism—Rogers occasionally interposing a remark. The only one of the poets who seemed not to enjoy himself was Moore. He was very attentive to Coleridge, but seemed to relish Lamb, next to whom he was placed.

(H. C. Robinson)



I wished for you yesterday. I dined in company with Wordsworth, Coleridge, Rogers, and Tom Moore—half the poetry of England constellated and clustered in Gloucester Place ! It was a delightful evening ! Coleridge was in his finest vein of talk—had all the talk ; and let 'em talk as evilly as they do of the envy of poets, I am sure not one there but was content to be nothing else but listener. The Muses were dumb while Apollo lectured on his and their fine art. It is a lie that poets are envious : I have known the best of them, and can speak of it, that they give each other their merits, and are the kindest critics as well as best authors. I am scribbling a muddy epistle with an aching head, for we did not quaff Hippocrene last night, marry ! It was hippocrass rather.

(Charles Lamb, in a letter to Bernard Barton)

